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FRENCH MEN AND FRENCH MANNERS.

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FRENCH MANNERS

(ODD CHAPTERS AND SKETCHES)

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

PARIS AND ITS INHABITANTS

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

PARIS AND ITS INHABITANTS.

THOSE who know Paris and France are aware that the capital virtually rules the whole of the land, not only in politics, but in matters of literature, art, fashion, and the drama. This uncontrovertible fact must be the justification of the title of this book, which apparently treats of Paris and the Parisians only. There is not a single Lord-Lieutenant of an English county who would presume to dictate to the Mayor and Municipal Council of the smallest borough in their management of local affairs; there is not a Prefect or Sub-prefect in France who would hesitate to suspend the Maire of the most important city, if the latter's political tactics happened to be opposed to those of the Minister to whom he (the Prefect) owed his appointment.

The *Edinburgh Review*, the *Dublin Review*, and *Chambers' Journal*, are read by thousands, not only in the provinces, but in the metropolis itself; a *Revue de Lyon* or a *Revue de Marseille* would be foredoomed in France.

Lecocq and Reyer selected Brussels for the first production of "La Fille de Madame Angot" and

"Sigurd" when Paris impresarios declined to produce these works. However anxious they may have been to give a provincial director the benefit of such an experiment, they knew that no provincial manager could afford to undertake it, and that apart from the cost of production involved.

Theoretically, the patrons of such a manager ought to have felt flattered at being called upon to give a verdict "in the first instance" on the works of men who had already then made good their artistic names; practically such a provincial audience would have considered it a slight to be asked to judge an opera for which no opening could be found on the metropolitan stage, and would have vented their resentment on composer, author, executants, and manager alike.

A provincial audience may now and again hiss an artist coming to it with a metropolitan reputation, "just to show its independence in matters of art," which quasi-independence is only "cussedness," as Americans call it; it will never applaud an artist who has failed in Paris. If the audience did applaud, its approval would not be of the slightest advantage to the artist himself as far as his chances of recovering his position in the capital went.

Hence, MM. Lecocq and Reyer elected to go to Brussels, the one to the Fantaisies-Parisiennes, the other to the Théâtre de la Monnaie. They knew that foreign opinion often weighs with Paris in art and literature, while provincial opinion, even if it ventured to speak, would simply be sneered at. The boasted

superiority of the Parisienne in all matters relating to feminine fashion, "the impregnable citadel of good taste" as Mme. Émile de Girardin called it, was laid low by an Englishman, a native of bucolic Lincolnshire, the late Mr. Worth; it is doubtful whether the Empress Eugénie, with all her exquisite beauty and instinctive elegance, would have been able to effect the radical change accomplished by the former apprentice of Swan and Edgar (not Marshall and Snelgrove, as has been stated). A more powerful sovereign than even Napoleon III.'s consort tried and failed. "I candidly own I am annoyed," said Louis XIV. one day, "to find that, with all my kingly authority in this country, I have been crying in vain against those extravagantly high structures on women's heads. Not a single person has felt inclined to make them lower in deference to me. But all at once there appears upon the scene a stranger, a bit of rubbish (*une guenille*) from England, who wears her hair low upon her head, and suddenly all the princesses go from one extreme to the other." The "bit of rubbish" happened to be Lady Sandwich, the wife of the English ambassador.

I might go on multiplying instances of this obstinacy on the part of Paris to be ruled in many things by foreign rather than provincial opinion, but such an attempt would lead me too far a-field. Sixteen years before Winsor (a German naturalized in England) obtained his concession for lighting Paris by gas, Philippe Le Bon, a native of Joinville in Champagne, had taken out a patent for a similar purpose. Winsor

himself subsequently acknowledged his indebtedness to Le Bon. But in spite of the powerful protection of Bonaparte (then First Consul) himself, Le Bon's invention was suffered to fall to the ground, while Winsor's took root in France. Le Bon died poor, assassinated on the very day of Napoleon I.'s coronation; Winsor and his successors, Pauwels, Manby, and Wilson (the latter was the father of Daniel Wilson, the son-in-law of the late President Grévy), made large fortunes.

This, then, is the mental condition of Paris with regard to art, literature, music, the drama and science. It absolutely ignores provincial opinion on those subjects, but accepts foreign opinion now and then, often for no other reason than because it is foreign. In one matter, though, Paris claims to do more than that, namely, in the matter of politics. Paris leaves the provinces nominally free to accept or reject its dictates in fashion, art, music, literature, and the drama, while knowing that provincial France of the latter end of the nineteenth century has no more will of its own in that respect than had provincial France of the middle of the seventeenth century, in which Molière laid the scene of "La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas."

But in political matters, the capital does not even allow the provinces such a nominal freedom. Paris claims not only the exclusive right of making revolutions, of making or unmaking this or that dynasty, of changing this or that system of government, but it pretends to impose such changes on the provinces with or without the latter's assent. The three separate failures

of La Vendée to resist that claim conclusively showed that the capital's boast is not an empty one. It would not be difficult to prove that if Louis Napoleon had been enabled to make his first attempt against the monarchy of Louis Philippe in Paris, instead of at Strasburg, the citizen-king would have left for England twelve years before he did. If, in the beginning of February, 1871, "résistance à outrance" had been preached by Gambetta from Paris, instead of from Bordeaux, the war with Germany would have been prolonged, notwithstanding the utter hopelessness of it. Shortlived as was the Commune, it would have been nipped in the bud in less than a week anywhere but in Paris.

All this would lead one to infer that the Parisian is, physically, a superiorly endowed creature; intellectually, a master-mind; morally, a man with an iron will either for good or evil, or for both. The fact is, that, with few exceptions, he is the very reverse. If he be a Parisian of either the second or third generation—and there are probably not 350,000, all told, of them in Paris—both his physique and constitution will be below the average physique and constitution of his provincial countrymen; and, if we bear in mind that in stature and stamina Frenchmen are generally inferior to other nations, we need not enlarge on that point. The Parisian is voluble, demonstrative, and sometimes ironical, and frequently enthusiastic. The casual observer is apt to mistake those characteristics for signs of a highly developed faculty of initiative and bold powers of conception; but in reality, they are nothing of the kind.

The slightest innovation in matters of science, art, and literature astonishes, if it does not frighten him, for the simple reason that intellectually he is a helot, and, what is worse, a helot who from sheer intellectual laziness declines to strike a blow for freedom. One instance in support of my contention will suffice.

I spoke just now of Winsor and his concession for lighting Paris by gas. A year after the inauguration of the opera house in the Rue le Peletier, Habeneck, who had succeeded Viotti in the management, produced "Aladdin ou la Lampe Merveilleuse," a posthumous opera by Nicolo, and finished by Benincori. Habeneck, who became famous subsequently as a musical director and the founder of the concerts of the Conservatoire, was a man of large views, and spent nearly £8000 on the new production, an enormous sum to spend in the pre-Véron managerial days. He conceived the happy thought of making the *première* of "The Magic Lamp" the occasion for introducing gas into the opera-house. I believe, but am not quite certain, that this was the first attempt to light the inside of a building in that way, although Winsor's concession dates from seven years previously, and part of the gardens of the Luxemburg, the colonnade of the Odéon theatre, and the inside of the Passage des Panoramas were lighted by gas two years after the signing of the grant. At any rate, I am inclined to this belief by an extract from a fashionable paper of that time, which extract I copied many years ago. The paper was the *Journal des Dames et des Modes*, a French precursor to *The Gentlewoman* and

kindred publications. In its issue of January 25, 1822, the paper takes the trouble to allay the fears of its readers by explaining to them that the hydrogen gas with which the opera will be provided is not set alight at the Abattoir Montmartre, where it is generated, and consequently does not travel aflame through the underground pipes. The paper has sent its reporters to the locksmith (?), where the chandelier is being made, and that individual has given them every assurance to the contrary. There will not be the slightest danger to the audience. I am not apt to extol the intelligence of one nation over another, but I doubt whether a greater instance of downright lack of intelligence could have been found, even at that time, in the smallest capital of Europe, and even in connection with a scientific invention.

As for strength of will, the Parisian has absolutely none; he is swayed hither and thither, much like a straw in a gust of wind, by this or that mob orator, provided the latter has a sufficiently large stock of high-sounding phrases at his command: nay, one such phrase will generally produce the effect; nor does it matter how often that phrase has done duty before. No capital in the world has a more magnificent collection of documents and works relating to its own history than Paris. When the Commune burned the Hôtel-de-Ville, its library was reduced to four or five volumes. M. Jules Cousin, the librarian, but for his generosity, would have found himself in the position of Casanova with the Prince de Ligne, *i.e.* of a

custodian with nothing to guard. He offered his own fifteen thousand volumes, the collection of which had been the work of a lifetime, to the city of Paris, leaving himself with only a complete Musset. Seven years later, the municipal library had increased to twenty-five thousand volumes; and in July, 1882, when my friend, M. Ralph Brown, a Frenchman, in spite of his name, took me over the new Hôtel-de-Ville, literally risen from its ashes, the tomes catalogued amounted to close upon thirty thousand, besides the documents, broadsheets, and pamphlets.

This is the pleasant side of the picture, reflecting the highest credit on those entrusted with the task of preserving the records of a city, than which there is no more beloved by its inhabitants, according to some of these inhabitants themselves — I mean the Parisians born, whom throughout these introductory pages I have in my mind's eye.

But there is love and love. "The yellow man," who stood by the side of Henri Heine as they steamed up the Thames in the summer of 1828, told him that "the Englishman loves liberty as a man loves his lawful wife: she is his, and, though he does not always treat her with conspicuous tenderness, he knows how to defend her when assailed, and woe to the 'redcoat' (*Wehe dem rothgeröckten Burschen*) who would invade the conjugal chamber, either as a would-be lover or as a constable. The Frenchman loves liberty as he loves his bride. His passion for her is all aflame; he flings himself at her feet with most glowing protestations; he

fights for her till the last drop of his blood; he commits a thousand follies for her." The German, still according to the yellow man, who, I fancy, is a purely imaginary creature evolved from Heine's brain, "loves liberty as he loves his grandmother."

With the alteration of one word, the description of the Frenchman's love of liberty fitly applies to the Parisian's love for Paris. He loves Paris as he would love his mistress, not his bride. For, in spite of the "yellow man's" assurance, we are doubtful whether the Frenchman would fling himself at his bride's feet, overwhelm her with protestations of undying affection, and be ready to commit a thousand follies for her, or court death in her defence. As the reader will see further on, marriage with most Frenchmen is too prosaic an arrangement to leave much scope for chivalrous action. Besides, no Frenchman would be allowed to fling himself at his bride's feet, or to pour words of passion into her ear; the only folly he would be permitted to commit would be to send her an expensive nosegay every morning during his short term of courtship. Moreover, he or his parents would be very careful indeed to inquire into his betrothed's past. Into his mistress's past the sensible Frenchman never inquires. Long before Alexandre Dumas the Younger opined that it is as dangerous to inquire into a woman's past as to explore a coal-mine with a naked candle, the modern, world-wise, and practical Gaul had come to the same conclusion. The Parisian, then, loves Paris as he would love his mistress. He is wilfully blind with

regard to her past; he is naturally short-sighted with regard to her future. That magnificent collection of books, all bearing more or less on the history of the capital, to which I referred just now, is virtually a white elephant as far as the Parisian himself is concerned, albeit that, for a wonder, there is not the slightest formality to be gone through to gain access to it.

As a consequence the Parisian is woefully ignorant about that Lutetia which in itself almost entirely represents the history of his country, he knows little or nothing about sentences that have determined events, and when he hears them drop from the lips of this or that political quack or agitator, either in their original shape or more or less mutilated, he applauds vociferously, and pins his faith for the time being on the plagiarist. "Not a stone of our fortresses, not an inch of our territory," exclaims Jules Favre in 1870, and forthwith the Parisians hail the words as the most eloquent phrase of defiance ever uttered. They absolutely intoxicate themselves and each other by repeating it *ad nauseam*, utterly ignorant of the fact that it forms part of the oath of the Knights-Templars. Henri Rochefort pretends to invent, or fancies he invents, the "Government of the National Defence;" the term belongs to Michelet, who applies it to the faction of the d'Armagnacs.[1] Gambetta strikes an attitude and bellows that he has made "a pact either with victory or with death;" it is

[1] Count Bernard d'Armagnac played an important part in the Civil Wars during the reign of Charles VI.

the retort of Basire, a member of the Convention (the same who voted that that body should address each other in the second person singular), to the question of Louis-Sébastien Mercier, the author of "Le Tableau de Paris," another member of the Convention. When that assembly was about to vote the decree not to treat with the foreigner while he, the foreigner, had his foot on French soil, the clever writer ironically inquired "if the Convention had made a pact with victory?" "No," retorted Basire, "but we have made a pact with death."

Glais-Bizoin, a colleague of Gambetta, rather than be beaten by him, and unable to bellow like "the great tribune"—the quotation marks are not mine,—seeing that he, Glais-Bizoin, could scarcely speak above a whisper,—Glais-Bizoin, when visiting the camp at Conlie, puts his hands behind his back *à la Napoléon*, nid-nods his head to the improvised legions who are to drive the hated Germans from the "sacred soil," and says, "Soldiers, I am pleased with you."

After the outbreak of the Commune, Jules Favre, having had to eat his own words with regard to the fortresses and the territory of France, thought he would like to treat the world to another sensational sentence, and asked pardon of Gods and men for not having disarmed the National Guards in time. The second attempt was as original as the first—only, instead of borrowing from the Knights-Templars, he borrowed from Danton, who had used the same sentence in speaking of the Revolutionary Tribunal. It did not matter a jot, for the Parisians no more remembered the one phrase

than the other. Their writers still continue to compare a woman's pretty mouth to a rose-bud, although Voltaire warned them long, long ago that the first man who made use of that comparison was a poet, the second an imbecile. During the siege and the Commune, the scum and riff-raff of Paris go howling about the streets that they will die or conquer, the Parisians who submit to their sway repeat the cry, not knowing that they are repeating the motto of Henri IV. at Arques.

The Republicans and revolutionaries are not the only ones who pilfer in that way, whether knowingly or the reverse. The Abbé Edgeworth, who attended Louis XVI. on the scaffold, never uttered the famous "Son of Saint Louis ascend to heaven," attributed to him by Carlyle and others. Charles His, a Royalist journalist of the time and a subsequent envoy of General Oudinot to Pius VII., coined the sentence several hours after the execution, and put it into the mouth of the Franco-Irish priest. Nevertheless, the Parisian of Legitimist tendencies will quote it to this day, often with tears in his eyes, just as he will quote the equally apocryphal "No halberds" of Charles X. The Parisian took and takes all this second-hand rhetorical flummery for sterling coin. He goes on admiring and repeating it, for he is as shallow, inconsistent, generous at times, cruel, weak, ignorant and frivolous at the hour of writing as he was a hundred, nay two hundred and fifty and three hundred years ago, when he was dragged into the League and the Fronde.

"Dragged in" is the word, and the only one, in

connection with those two uprisings, for Michelet proves conclusively that, after the compulsory flight of Henri III. (May 12, 1588), and the Journée des Barricades during the Regency of Anne of Austria (August 27, 1648), not a third of the Paris population rallied to either of the insurgent chiefs. And Michelet is, after all, the most trustworthy historian with regard to facts, as distinguished from comments on facts. Nor do I want the facts adduced by Michelet to prove—as far as I am personally concerned—that the born Parisian detests revolutions. I have only to take up the numberless memoirs left by real Parisians—the real Parisian, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau describes him, "un vrai Parisien de Paris, un archi-Parisien du bon Dieu, bonhomme comme un Champenois"—to become convinced that they view askance any and every attempt to change the established order of things by violent means.

With regard to the revolutions, revolts, insurrections and disturbances of the last hundred years, the word "dragged in" would barely apply, for with very few exceptions, the Parisian merely stands by and submits. By reason of his numerical inferiority he cannot help himself, he has no choice in the matter. The police reports on the state of public opinion during *the* Revolution make it clear beyond a doubt that the excesses committed in its name were submitted to rather than accepted by Paris—I am still speaking of its native population, of the lower, middle, and higher bourgeoisie. The phrase that recurs most frequently in

those reports is that uttered by the people while they are waiting in a line to be served by the provision dealers, as they waited during the siege. "Hurrah for the old régime," they exclaim. "At any rate there was plenty of everything." And the shopkeepers reply, "We are not to blame; it is your confounded friends from the country who cause all this scarcity."

This was the unvarnished truth; the scarcity of food, though originally an artificial one, had been aggravated by the inordinate number of provincials who, ever since 1785 had invaded Paris, and still further swamped the natives, who in normal times represented but one-third of the resident population. That proportion varies very little even to-day; it has scarcely varied at all during the last hundred years, the only period about which one can speak with any degree of certainty, the mechanism of the census before that having been too imperfect to trust to. Large families are very rare throughout the length and breadth of France; in Paris they may be pronounced almost phenomenal. "L'amour, c'est l'égoïsme en deux personnes," wrote Boufflers (Stanislas), of the Académie. He might have added that, in France, marriage is the sacrifice of two persons to the selfishness of two families. "I have done a tremendous stroke of business," says a successful trader to his wife, in a play, the name of which I do not remember at this moment—"I have done a tremendous stroke of business, and—I think we may allow ourselves the luxury of a second child." I need not dilate upon this specimen of "Malthus with the chill off,"

it is but one of the numberless effects of one ineradicable vice of the French character—greed.

The extraordinary influx of provincials during the four years which preceded the Revolution neither caused nor accelerated that uprising, which had, as it were, become inevitable. A twelvemonth before its outbreak it was foretold by the father of Mirabeau, who, alluding to his son, wrote: "The hour for people of his kind has struck, for at this moment there is no woman who may not conceive and bring forth an Artevelde or a Masaniello." I repeat, the extraordinary influx of provincials neither caused nor accelerated the Revolution, but it invested it from the beginning with a character of violence and cruelty which without that influx would probably have remained absent from it. "Half ape, half tiger," Voltaire is supposed to have called the population of Paris after the horrible execution of Damiens, whom historians describe as a regicide, though he neither killed nor intended to kill Louis XV. What Voltaire really did say was, that Paris was inhabited by tigers goaded by apes; the provincial is the tiger, the Parisian the ape.

And it was the provincial who, at any rate in the beginning of the Revolution, committed the excesses. He had been attracted to Paris by the scheme for embellishing the capital and the consequent building operations undertaken during the reign of Louis XVI., a scheme the execution of which was doomed to be suddenly interrupted, like those of Charles V., Henri IV., Louis XIV., and the two Napoleons. The poverty

of the Exchequer put a stop to all attempts in that direction in 1788; the building yards became deserted, and the whole of that extra population of Paris was cast upon the streets without the smallest means of subsistence, and consequently ready for any and every mischief. It wanted but one spark to set that mass of inflammable material alight.

Who struck the spark? Not a Parisian, but a provincial—Camille Desmoulins, a native of Guise. Who, under the pretext, nay, with the intention perhaps of keeping the conflagration within certain limits, of organizing the salvage, put himself at the head of the armed force? A provincial—Lafayette, born at Chavagnac, and a marquis to boot. Who became the mouthpiece of the Revolution? Mirabeau, who saw the light at Bignon. Who, when evil days grow apace, becomes the master of the situation for some time by exciting the people with stories of plots against them? who becomes the high priest of the viragos—whom history knows as the *tricoteuses*—in their bloody rites? Not a Parisian, not even a Frenchman, but a Swiss, a native of Boudry—Marat. And though the Parisians are tired of his yoke, and more than tired, there is not one who attempts to lift a hand against this fiend in human shape. The heroic task is reserved for a young girl from the provinces, Charlotte Corday d'Armont, a native of Normandy. What part does the Parisian play in all this? He does not play a part. He is only a supernumerary in the piece from the very first rise of the curtain to its final drop.

And lest the latter assertion should be seriously challenged, I proceed to give chapter and verse for it. Under the *ancien régime*, the mayor, aldermen, councillors, and law officers of the Paris municipality were bound to be natives of the capital, and had to belong to the bourgeoisie, which word had a much more restricted meaning then than it has now, and signified the members of the various trading and industrial corporations. Thirteen days after the outbreak of the Revolution those wise precautions were destroyed for all time; for though the Revolution, as I have said already, was neither caused nor accelerated by the journeymen builders out of work, it was nevertheless in the main the work of provincials, but of provincials who had for many years, perhaps, been resident in the capital. On the 14th of July the last provost of Paris is dragged from the Hôtel-de-Ville to the Palais-Royal, to be judged publicly "for having attempted to lead the Paris population by the nose." A note found in the pockets of the governor of the Bastille, which had been taken a few hours previously, left no doubt that such was the intention of Provost Flesselle, who never reached the Palais-Royal, but was shot through the head on his way thither by a young man.

After that, the electors make a clean sweep of the aldermen and councillors, and depute four hundred of their own number to transact the most pressing business and guard the place pending the election of a provisional municipality, which is to consist of a hundred and twenty members. Sixteen of these are Parisians,

the rest are provincials. The ill-fated Sylvain Bailly is elected *maire*, the first who acts under that name. He is a Parisian born. He stands like a patch of light against that sombre picture of violence and cruelty, the tide of which he endeavours to stem on several occasions; his reward is the scaffold. He is too great a lover of order, this simple-minded savant, who by consulting the heavenly bodies can calculate many things, but cannot calculate his own fate; though at the beginning of his mayoralty it has been as good as foretold to him by *Le Marforio*, one of the numberless papers that spring up like mushrooms. "Remember, Bailly, that we give you sixty thousand francs, not to do unto us what you would like, but to do yourself what we like. Remember it, if not—*fiat voluntas* —a bit of rope and the iron arm of a lamp." Such was the fate of one of the few Parisians who actively meddled with the Revolution and endeavoured to do good. Well might Bailly's fellow-townsman, Adrien Duport, congratulate himself on not having followed the astronomer's example, and on having remained in his study instead. He, Adrien Duport, remains absolutely unmoved amidst the clang and clamour of the contending parties: he lets others make the songs, and contents himself with making the laws; that is, he strips the old criminal and civil procedure of a number of unnecessary vexatious and even cruel formulas, and lays the foundation, as it were, of the modern system of French law, which the compilers of the subsequent code will find ready to their hands.

Napoleon was not oblivious of those facts, and of the tendencies of the born Parisian in general to be a law-abiding subject, if left to himself, but also of his liability to be led into extremes by others. Even before he placed the imperial crown on his head he had thoroughly ascertained the degree of complicity of Parisians in all the bloody episodes that had preceded his advent. "I have examined all the available documents in connection with the disastrous events of the last ten years," he said, shortly after the establishment of the Consulate, "and I am bound to say, in justice to the people of this city, and in order to clear them in the sight of other nations and of posterity, that the number of downright bad citizens has always been exceedingly small. Out of every four hundred implicated in no matter what act of violence, I have convinced myself that considerably more than two-thirds were absolute strangers to the capital."

The Parisian, in fact, unless he be very strong-minded, is very weak-minded. Old bird though he may fancy himself, he is positively to be caught with "chaff"—of course I use the word in the colloquial sense. He will try to kill with an epigram, in which attempt he does not always succeed, owing to the toughness of the hide of the object assailed; nevertheless, his faith in the power of epigram is not shaken, simply because he himself remains susceptible to it for good or for evil. An epigram frequently dispels his anger; it as frequently forces that anger into frenzy. One day, in 1789, the mob catch sight, in the streets, of the famous

Abbé (afterwards Cardinal) Maury, and forthwith begin to howl, "À la lanterne! à la lanterne!"—the guillotine had not replaced the favourite lamp-arm then. The abbé faces them quietly: "Suppose you do hang me from that lamp-arm, do you think the lamp itself will afford you a better light for the future?" he remarks. The mob disperses without another word. On another occasion a ruffian, armed with a chopper, runs after him. "Where is that Abbé Maury?" he yells; "I'll send him to say mass in hell." The abbé turns round and faces his pursuer: "That's all right," he says, "but you'll help me to perform it." And, taking out his pistols, he adds, "Here are the cups for the wine and the oil." The people applauded, and almost trampled the would-be assassin to death. "Each epigram gave Maury a month's rest and security," said the almost equally famous Abbé de Pradt.

And here I may be permitted to give a personal anecdote, showing that the hundred years which have gone by since then have wrought no change in the Parisian's temper in that respect. At the outset of the general elections in the autumn of 1885, the Monarchists looked like carrying everything before them. The *Gaulois*, which professes to be devoted to the Orleanist cause, and often professes in questionable taste, considered it necessary to illuminate its premises. Thereupon *L'Événement*, a republican paper originally started under the auspices of Victor Hugo, and situated just opposite the *Gaulois*, on the Boulevard Montmartre, began to illuminate also. It refused to consider the

first engagement of the electoral campaign as the final test of the strength of the opposing parties, which refusal was eventually justified by a reversal of the earlier verdict. The rival illuminations, however, attracted great crowds to the spot, and the authorities, apprehensive of disturbances, had the whole of the Boulevard Montmartre cleared, and placed a cordon of sergents-de-ville at each end, to prevent access to it. It so happened that a couple of friends of mine, a young Frenchman from Bordeaux and his wife, an Australian, had taken up their quarters at the Hôtel de Beauséjour, which is at the angle of the Boulevard Poissonnière and the Faubourg Montmartre, and one evening I proposed to accompany them as far as their door. At the angle of the Rue Drouot the officier de paix (superintendent) told us that we could not pass. The young wife was very tired, and the prospect of having to trudge down the Rue Drouot, along the whole of the Rue Grange-Batelière, and up the Faubourg Montmartre again, somewhat alarmed her. I pointed this out to the officer, and he, in his turn, on my giving him my word that the Hôtel de Beauséjour was our destination, was about to let us pass, when a clamour arose from some Parisian workmen who were standing by—I recognized them by their accent. "They are favoured because they are foreigners," they shouted, and it really looked for a moment as if they were going to bar our way by force. They could not have done so effectually, but neither I nor the officier de paix was inclined to risk the semblance of a disturbance for so trifling a matter. I

thanked the officer for his courtesy, and we were about to turn down the Rue Drouot. On passing before the shouters, I could not resist the temptation of having a shot at them. "Vous avez raison, messieurs, nous sommes des étrangers, mais vous deviez savoir que la bêtise humaine n'a pas de nationalité," I said aloud. In another instant I had the laugh on my side, and the remonstrants of a moment before joined in it against themselves. "C'est vous qui avez raison, monsieur!" exclaimed several voices. "Laissez ces messieurs et cette dame passer, monsieur l'officier de paix." And we passed, unhindered any further. "The Parisians are frogs; we must let them croak," said Marie-Antoinette. She was the least able to judge, because she did not understand them, and in her inmost heart was afraid of them. The only sovereign perhaps who understood them thoroughly was Louis Philippe. If, in February, 1848, he had been ten years younger, the revolution that cost him his throne would have been nipped in the bud and without bloodshed, although there would have been a great waste of water. He would not have brought out the artillery but the fire-hose, as he proposed to do on a former occasion; for the Parisians detest getting wet. The beginnings of all uprisings for the last hundred years have been favoured by dry, if not altogether fine weather. "They will not come to-night, for it rains," said Pethion, one evening, looking out of the window and closing it again, while his friends, the Girondins, were expecting an attack by the mob, incited by La Montagne, *i.e.* the

most violent of the Jacobins. The anecdote is told in order to show Pethion's imperturbability in the hour of danger; in reality it shows his knowledge of the temperament of the Paris population. First of all, they dislike getting wet: secondly, they will not fight, especially in the streets of the city, unless they are assured of an appreciative audience, and that audience will always be wanting under unfavourable meteorological conditions.

For the Parisian, and, for that matter, the provincial who has become assimilated to the Parisian by a long residence in the capital is as often attracted to the scene of disorder by sheer, idle curiosity as by the wish to participate actively in what goes on. In fact, turn these two whichever way you will, it is difficult to deny that in most cases they are simpletons writ large, especially if they be prosperous. It is they who during the Commune toiled up the heights of Montmartre to see the insurgents at work, to have a chat with them, and in several instances, and at the cost of a few francs, they gave themselves the gratification of discharging a gun at the Versaillais. Had they been told that, by their silly conduct, they were virtually countenancing, if not abetting the insurgents, that they were playing into the hands of the enemies of France besides delaying the rest so urgently needed by the country, they would have shaken their heads, and answered, "No, no, monsieur, we have no such intention; we are good Frenchmen and, above all, good citizens." They erred and err through intellectual

sluggishness. For that highly vaunted *esprit parisien* is not theirs; they merely live in the reflection of it: it is the property of perhaps two thousand persons in all, their fellow-townsmen either by birth or adoption,—writers, artists, dramatists, savants, or mere men of wit,—who have succeeded one another throughout the generations, but not by descent, and have made Paris what it is, what Victor Hugo called it, "the Beacon City" (and not the City of Light). These men absolutely constitute a caste apart, they have nothing in common with those amidst whom they live, save the greed which is innate with nearly all Frenchmen, and from which vice even they are rarely exempt. These, then, commit follies like the rest of mankind, but it is with their eyes open, *en connaissance de cause*, as the French themselves have it. To illustrate my meaning one story must suffice.

During the Restoration and the reign of Louis-Philippe there lived in Paris a bohemian named Chodric-Duclos, clever, accomplished, well connected, but terribly improvident. He had been a veritable Apollo in his early manhood, but the virile beauty was gone, and he wandered about in rags, borrowing a few francs here and there, living heaven knew where. He was an ardent Royalist, but both Louis XVIII. and Charles X. had been compelled to withdraw their protection at the instance of the powerful family of La Rochejaquelein, one of whose younger members Duclos had killed in a duel. "Duclos has done me too much good to do him any harm," said Louis XVIII.; "but I shall cease to do him good." That

was the beginning of Duclos' decline; nevertheless, he remained staunch to his dynastic colours. When the revolution of 1830 broke out, he found himself, on the second day, close to a barricade, from the top of which some boys were firing at the Swiss Guards. Of course, they aimed badly, and their bullets went far beside the mark. Duclos, who was a magnificent shot, felt disgusted at the waste of powder and shot, quietly crept to the back of the structure, and clambered up. "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves," he said to the astonished lads; "when I was your age, I could spot my man at a hundred yards. Let me show you how to do it." And forthwith he takes up one musket and brings down a Swiss Guard; then another, and a third. The workmen standing below and looking out of the windows applaud frantically, and bid him "go on." "I can't," he shouts, then explains. "You see, I belong to their side. I only came up here to show these lads how to do it."

Upon the face of it, the act of Duclos is as senseless as that of the *bourgeois* pointing the cannon of the Commune at the Versaillais, yet the one strikes you as Aristophanesque, the other as Dogberrylike.

The two thousand men of whom I spoke just now as constituting the aristocracy of letters, art, science, music, commerce, finance, politics, and industry are also mainly recruited from the provinces. A few like Cherbuliez, Edouard Rod, Camille Lemonnier, Alfred Stevens, the late De Nittis, Sargent, etc., are not Frenchmen at all; another few are Parisians. There is no

doubt that Paris owes her intellectual prestige in a great measure to the provincials, to those who were impelled thither by the consciousness of their own power; there is equally no doubt that another and much more numerous section of provincials has been the bane of the capital, because the capital refused to take them at their own estimate. In their hatred of the city which did not call them within its walls, they are for ever on the watch to be avenged on the theatre itself in which they elected to try their incapacities. Robespierre was a fair sample of the cantankerous provincial, and Robespierre's venom has been the lymph that has inoculated four generations of ambitious, rapacious mediocrities, who have put their heel on Paris for some time, and dictated to France in consequence. To prove this, I must hark back once more to the earlier periods of the Great Revolution.

The law of the 27th of June, 1790, having provided for the reorganization of the municipalities, ninety-six notables, elected by the forty-eight sections of the capital, took their seats, in the month of October, at the Hôtel-de-Ville, under the appellation of the "Commune de Paris," which title was partially altered on two occasions in conjunction with the quickly following events that modified its functions. The day after the death and fall of Robespierre, namely, on the 10th Thermidor of the year III. (corresponding to our 28th of July, 1794), the "Regenerated Commune," which had endeavoured to support Robespierre, disappeared violently, seventy-one—some say, nearly a hundred—

of its members were outlawed and executed. Well, during its less than four years' existence 223 individuals had succeeded one another there in the mismanagement of metropolitan affairs. How many of those "Civic Fathers" belonged to Paris? Twelve. On the other hand, the number of aliens, Swiss, Prussians, Italians, Swedes, Danes and Americans in that assembly was thirty-four.

The Reign of Terror was over, and unquestionably it was a born Parisian who had put an end to it by his determined attitude at the critical moment. One must not look a gift-horse in the mouth, and it will not do to fathom men's motives too closely, least of all those of Jean Lambert Tallien on that and other occasions. "If the nose of Cleopatra had been shorter than it was, the whole face of the world would have been changed," said Pascal, alluding to her fatal influence over Mark Antony. If the husband of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Guyenne (Louis VII.) had been as handsome with his beard off as with his beard on, his wife, notwithstanding his conjugal shortcomings, would not have repudiated him, and would have been unable to marry the Count of Anjou, afterwards Henry II. of England. The provinces that constituted her dowry would not have reverted to England, there would have been no hundred years' war between England and France, and there would have been one virgin less in history, namely, the Maid of Orleans. If Boulanger had not met with Madame de Bonnemain, the Duc d'Orléans might be seated, at the hour I write, on the

throne of his great-grandfather. If Thérèse de Fontenay (*née* Cabarrus) had been less handsome than she was, Tallien might not have delivered her from her prison at Bordeaux, she would not have accompanied him to Paris as his mistress, they would not have incurred Robespierre's suspicion by their reactionary tendencies, their lives would not have been in danger, Tallien would not have screwed up his courage to the sticking point and bearded Robespierre in the midst of his supporters, and Robespierre would have been allowed to pursue his career of unbridled violence for Heaven knows how long. Nevertheless, look at the matter from whatever point you will, the fact remains that Tallien, a Parisian, put an end to the Reign of Terror, and it is a set-off against the claim of the provincials to having bred the heroine who slew Marat.

The Reign of Terror itself—the Parisians should not forget it, for it proves that their constant boast of dominating France politically is open to grave discussion—the Reign of Terror itself was absolutely the work of provincials. That "new faith" in, that reliance upon, blood and murder to bring about a social millennium was, it is true, started in Paris, and disseminated throughout France by representatives of the capital, and by means of ambulant revolutionary tribunals. But the leaders were provincials to a man. Robespierre came from Arras; Saint-Just belonged to the Nivernais; Couthon was an Auvergnat; Lebas hailed from the Pas-de-Calais; Fouquier-Tinville, Henriot, Chaumette, and Hébert were also provincials.

But the provincials who are animated by hostile intentions towards the capital are not abashed by this sudden repression of violence by violence; another class, the Whites, or reactionaries, converges towards Paris, and although the Terrorists and Jacobins that remain there are pointed at with the finger of scorn by the Parisians themselves, carefully watched by the police, and compelled to keep silent, the Whites consider such mild measures insufficient, and leave their homes with the avowed intention of taking more severe reprisals, which, in unvarnished language, means a second series of carnage, bloodshed, and pilfering, this time in the name of the divine right of kings. The Directory gets frightened, and sends a message to the Council of the Five Hundred, asking leave to expel from the capital the enormous number of individuals who are invading it, and the majority of whom are known to foster evil intentions. The relief prayed for is granted, the police are invested with discretionary powers to refuse permanent residence to those not born in the capital.

Napoleon himself preferred to deal with the provincial "on his native ground," rather than let him loose among the gullible and inflammable Parisians, who at the critical moment not only leave him, the provincial, the arbiter of the fate of their city, but the arbiter of the whole of France's destiny. In September, 1804, when the question of the arrival of Pius VII. was already being discussed, Bonaparte seriously suggested the advisability of selecting a town other than Paris

for his coronation. His enemies and detractors have insinuated that this was but another attempt to take a leaf from the book of the *ancien régime*, that Napoleon wished to be crowned at Rheims. I doubt whether such was the case. At a sitting of a Council of State, he gave his reasons plainly. "Paris has always been the bane of France," he said. In reality, Napoleon was afraid of Paris. In one of the many "memoirs" that have appeared within the last few years, the writer, one of Napoleon's own generals, endeavoured to make him out a coward. It is scarcely necessary to show the ridiculousness of such a charge; for argument's sake, however, we will admit, for a moment, that the charge was not devoid of foundation. The most hostile critic of Henri IV. has never uttered the word "coward" in connection with him; yet, Henri IV., when about to enter Paris, felt inclined to turn back. By his own confession he dared not go into "this den of wild beasts" (*spélonque de bestes farouches*). But the wildest beast, according to the most competent naturalists, is peacefully inclined when replete with food, and there always was and there would be still enough food and to spare for the Parisian born, and even for the Parisian by adoption—as distinct from the freebooter, but for the enormous influx of the latter, who appropriates that food by unfair means. Nearly two hundred and fifty years ago, Evelyn remarked on the prosperity of Paris, notwithstanding its absence of wholesale trade. "It is a miracle to me that in a city which has no wholesale commerce, every one you meet in the streets and public

places should be well-dressed and well-fed." I am quoting from memory, but that is the spirit of his words, if not their exact text. To all appearance, the population of Paris is as comfortably clothed and as well-fed to-day as it was then; for there is no denying that some of the scenes of wretchedness, privation, and degradation I have described in this book have to be looked for, they do not "meet the eye" as they do in London. The copyists, the victims of the shady registry office, the rag-gatherers and beggars I have endeavoured to sketch in these pages would individually—I mean as simple specimens—pass unperceived in London. When you happen to come upon one in Paris, he attracts your notice because of the startling contrast he presents to his surroundings. Perhaps I may be allowed to say a few words more on the subject, for I am not at all sure that I have made my meaning clear.

Nowadays there are few things either in London or Paris that strike me as new, simply because the two capitals have become as one to me. I cross the Channel as I would cross the Thames, and I am afraid I cross the latter less frequently than the former. Yet, in spite of this, I never fail to look a second time at the milk-maid, who, I fancy, is fast disappearing from the London streets. Her clean and tidy linsey-woolsey skirt well above the ankles and feet, the latter cased in strong, serviceable, brightly shining boots,—the neat Rob-Roy shawl across her shoulders,—the spotless and ample print apron,—all this forms a contrast to the general untidiness of her own class. On the other

hand, the bedraggled dress, the soiled erstwhile white apron, the greasy Paisley shawl, the unspeakable hat with the limp feathers and often grimy ornaments, the boots gaping at the seams, of the London flower-girl, no longer inspire me with either disgust, pity, or journalistic curiosity; they are in keeping with the filth and squalor of a couple of score of individuals I am sure to meet during an hour's walk in no matter what direction, not excepting the West-End thoroughfares.

In Paris, ninety-five per cent. of the lower classes—including some of the nondescripts whose avocations are nameless, the "free lances and trappers of the pavement"—are at any rate outwardly clean and trim; the commissionnaire in his velveteen suit, the cabman in his glazed hat and uniform, the coster in his blue blouse, and the hodman and artisan in his white one are not blots on the picture; on the contrary, they relieve it from too great a uniformity, and relieve it in a manner pleasant to the eye. In London that uniformity is relieved by the flower-girl already mentioned, by the rags of the newspaper-boy and crossing-sweeper, by the tumbled bonnet jauntily poised on the dishevelled locks of the gin-sodden crone lurching out of the publichouse, by the threadbare dust-stained clothes of the artisan who thinks it inconsistent with his dignity to wear a blouse, by the battered and grease-coated billycock when a cloth cap would be so much nicer, comfortable, and cheaper. Enough: the reader may fill in the rest for himself.

Well, behind this picture of a generally prosperous Paris there lurks a demon, compared with which the demons of class hatred, demagogy, and democracy are sweet and benign philanthropists. It is the Parisian's hatred of the needy and unscrupulous provincial, whose yoke he cannot shake off; who takes the bread out of his mouth by all sorts of shady, though sometimes eventually successful commercial, industrial, and financial speculations; who politically rules far more despotically than any absolute monarch of the past; who has introduced wholesale trading with a vengeance—wholesale trading which, strange as it may seem, is objectionable to the majority of the natives, for they are constitutionally averse to vast enterprises. They would simply keep their city as a huge pleasure-ground for the rest of the civilized world; they would be content with the profits arising from the constant influx of strangers with well-lined pockets; they would not deviate by a hair's-breadth from the policy enunciated by Louis XIV. to Mansart. When Le Roi-Soleil planned his embellishments and architectural reforms for the capital—among which was the construction of the Hôtel des Invalides—the famous architect became frightened at the enormous outlay involved, and got "muddled" with the accounts. "You go on building," said the king; "I will advance the money. The strangers who will flock to Paris will refund it."

Since then every sovereign—with the exception of Louis XV. and Louis Philippe—has pursued a similar policy, and, rightly or wrongly, the Parisian takes a

pride in his native city, which pride, as the years roll by, is constantly kept alive by the hymns sung in praise of Paris by the foreigner, who often gives that praise in spite of himself. One of the most implacable adversaries of France in general, and of Paris in particular, namely, Count Rostopchine—the same who burned Moscow, rather than allow it to fall into the hands of Napoleon,—Count Rostopchine, then, after calling Paris a huge madhouse, goes on to say, "And yet I am bound to acknowledge that that city is the mistress of Europe; for, let people say what they like, as long as polite society shall continue to speak French, as long as women will follow the dictates of fashion, as long as good cheer will be one of the charms of existence, as long as theatres will constitute one of the pleasures of life, Paris will continue to influence other countries. It is very certain that no other city in the world contains an equal number of scholars, savants, and estimable men."

Wellington, who enters Paris, in 1815, with the avowed intention of teaching the French capital to be moral for the future, yields to the seductive charm of "modern Babylon." He spends £120,000 there in six weeks; and one may well doubt whether *all* the money went in teaching the vanquished to live cleanly and like gentlemen. The Grand Duke Constantine spent £160,000 in one month; Blücher, during his stay, got rid of £240,000. When he left, all his estates were mortgaged; for he had scarcely been away for four and twenty hours from the foremost gambling-hells in the

Palais-Royal. In short, the presence of the allied armies made the fortune of the inhabitants of Paris; for the conquerors crowded the cafés, the theatres, the avowable and unavowable places of amusement. They not only supplied the war-tax they had imposed upon the vanquished, but they left behind them an enormous surplus in their endeavours to teach Paris the elements of *their* morality.

Is it a wonder, then, that the Parisian loves his city, which, corrupt and morally rotten to the core as it may be—I am quoting others, in this instance—evokes, nevertheless, the admiration of every one who visits it, whether he be a student of history, or merely intent on rational or irrational enjoyment?

Is it a wonder, then, that he should hate the provincial, against whom he has to sustain an hourly struggle, in order not to be completely ousted; the provincial who has specially selected Paris as the stage on which to tear his political passion to tatters, just as the quack and mountebank "pitches" in the market-place to sell his worthless nostrums; the provincial who, not content to sail on the bright rippling current of Paris life, tries to convert that current into a whirlpool, so that he may have the wreckage; the provincial who, in times of trouble, fomented by himself and his fellow adventurers, threatens to make "Paris the Sarragossa of the Republic, and, if that does not suffice, to make it, torch in hand, another Moscow"? I am not exaggerating; these are the words of M. Étienne Arago, the *maire* of Paris after the 4th of

September, 1870; of M. Arago, whom the biographical dictionaries describe as *auteur dramatique et homme politique.* M. Arago, who may be dead for all I know, hailed from the Pyrénées-Orientales; he was one of the nine provincials who, in conjunction with two Parisians, Rochefort and Picard, constituted the government of National Defence.

M. Arago's words will bear fruit in a short time, *i.e.* in May, 1871, when the Commune, which calls itself "the soul of Paris"—sixty-six of its members out of eighty are provincials—sets fire to the capital rather than submit to the newly elected chamber, which, at any rate, has some semblance of legality. The Commune, however, contemptuously calls it "La Chambre des Ruraux," and, in virtue of its hold of Paris, claims to inaugurate a new era in France. Had the Commune's life been prolonged for another two months, France might have submitted to its dictates, or, to speak correctly, imitated its proceedings in every large centre—the smaller ones would have followed suit as a matter of course.

For France, whether she cares to admit it or not, will be ruled till the end of time by the capital in her political as well as other concerns. That is why, though the sketches in this book ostensibly treat of Paris and its inhabitants, I have ventured on the title of "French Men and French Manners." Save in a few unimportant particulars, France has no will of her own; she submits tamely to a dictatorship, the real origin of which she has never fathomed.

After the taking of the Bastille, the Abbé Maury, of whom I have already spoken, was placed on the list of the proscribed by the faction of Philippe-Égalité. Maury got frightened, and fled to Péronne, which town he represented in the States-General. The liberalism which, at the outset, had recommended him to the electors, had not been proof against the excesses committed in Paris; he had turned traitor, as it were, to the party to which he owed his seat. Had he acted in a similar manner to a Paris constituency of that period, his would have been a short shrift. Péronne simply sent him back to the capital without hurting a hair of his head. Rivarol, the greatest wit and the most uncompromising enemy of the Revolution, commented upon this leniency of the Péronnese in the *Journal Politique National.*

"We inquired of these gentlemen, and of all the electors, why the nation did not murder its prisoners at Péronne as it murdered its prisoners in Paris, and why their town deprived itself of the sight of those executions which afford such pleasure to, and confer such honour on, the Parisians; for, 'without wishing to hurt any one,' we added, 'M. l'Abbé Maury was a worthy object of your patriotic anger. Why did you send him back to Paris? Are you waiting for a more auspicious opportunity, like the people of Beaune?' * 'Messieurs,' the maire of Péronne had gravely replied,

* An allusion to the leniency of the people of Beaune towards the members of the League, whom they did not murder when Beaune surrendered to Henri IV.

'Paris has the right of execution over the whole of the kingdom; we ourselves never execute any one, unless he be a Picard, for we are not exactly the nation, like the Parisians.'"

It is the truest word ever said in jest: the Parisians are supposed to be the nation. In reality, the Parisians are the figure-head of the privateer, manned by provincials. But the provincials who stay at home do not know this. They remind one of the characters in the old-fashioned plays, who mistake the impudent, disguised flunkey for a grand seigneur, and model their manners on his.

FRENCH MEN AND FRENCH MANNERS.

CHAPTER I.

French home-life—The mistake of Englishmen and Americans with regard to the docility of French servants; the cause of the error—French dwelling-houses—Fifty servants in one block of flats; Their meeting-place—A preliminary glance at the concierge—The trained female servant a rarity in France—The French and English female servants in their own homes; their ambitions; their respective trainings—The French servant's ignorance of the social difference between herself and her employers—Cleanliness as understood in France—The appointments of the dinner-table—Hot water—Beauty, a marketable commodity—The heroine of Ouida's "Puck"—Menial service humiliating to most Frenchmen—Statistics in the streets of Paris—M. Aurélien Scholl's views of female servants—Peasant-girls and peasant-girls—The painter of "L'Angelus" delivers an opinion—Zola's "La Terre" an absolutely true picture of French peasant life—Taine's opinion—Pierre Larousse's "Dictionnaire"—Servants' wages—The kitchen—Baths—A sally of Nestor Roqueplan—The piano in the drawing-room; the concert in the kitchen—An anecdote—French Jeannette and English Jane—The cook and her perquisites.

THE Englishman and American—I write for their amusement mainly—are apt to look upon the French servant, or what they assume to be such, as a creature much more docile and respectful than their own. There

are many reasons for this absolutely erroneous and lenient view with regard to the French servant. To begin with, the servants the visitor sees at the hotels are not French at all; they are mostly Swiss and Germans, the latter passing as Alsatians and Austrians. Secondly, the Englishman or American does not often come in direct contact with his own servants, whose misdeeds are generally magnified by his womankind—up to a certain point. Should he, the male, attempt to follow in his wife's, sister's, or mother's track, and begin to abuse the domestics also, the chances are ten to one that the spouse, sister, or mother would turn round upon him, plainly giving him to understand that "they are the best she can get," and that "if they are not good enough" for him "he had better pass a few days in the registry-offices to try his luck, and, furthermore, spend a fortnight or three weeks at home afterwards to teach them their duties." The Englishman or American, foreseeing all this, allows his womankind to grumble, rarely joining them so as to make the solo a duet. After all, he is not near the servants. If he live in chambers he is probably waited upon by a housekeeper, who in her earlier days has been a superior servant in some large family. She is by no means a bad kind of ministering angel, provided one manages to grease the machinery of her wings now and then, or simply allows her to grease them herself from the tea-caddy and store-cupboard. The bachelor who would live in comfort should allow his womankind to do the catering, but distinctly forbid them to ask too many questions with regard to the

ultimate destination of the supplies. This is simply a word of advice which was not contemplated in my original programme of this book.

The housekeeper has probably a lieutenant in the shape of a niece or cousin from the country, the daughter of some small farmer who has come to live with her aunt. She is fresh and buxom, agreeable and cleanly, and if he, the bachelor, be not grumpy, he is likely to have a good time of it. In private lodgings, unless the bachelor be a bear with a sore head, the slavey, even if she be the very "Belinda" of *Our Boys*, will be more mindful of his comfort than of that of her mistress. But whether in chambers, in private lodgings, or in his own home, the better-class Englishman knows little or nothing of his servants. They live below-stairs, and we will trust, for their own independence' sake, that they will continue to do so, although our trust is already considerably shaken by the system of living in flats, which is fast invading us. Unless I am much mistaken, this constant propinquity of the servants to their masters and mistresses will eventually be found a serious drawback to our new-fangled dwelling places.

The Parisian, unless he be rolling in money, has no choice in the matter. Even in the largest apartments, the kitchen and what we will call the servants' hall are inconveniently near to the drawing-room and bedrooms; they are on the same level with the latter, and privacy is almost impossible. As a rule, the servant has her own bedroom at the top of the house, in a long,

whitewashed, bare passage. There may be from a dozen to two dozen of such bedrooms, according to the size of the house. But I will take the average one, and confine myself to mansions inhabited by no more than a dozen families, though there are comparatively few of that kind. The building is generally divided into two blocks, one whose front windows look on to the street, the back windows on to a large courtyard; the windows of the other look on to anywhere and everywhere, except on to pleasant spots. Twenty families in one building is, as I have said already, by no means an exception, and some of these have frequently two female domestics and not unfrequently a male servant besides. The latter rules the womankind—of course I mean the domestic womankind,—and not only the womankind who are his fellow-servants, but the female servants of others. Especially is this the case if he happens to be young and attractive in the French acceptation of the term, which means that he looks like a hairdresser's dummy, and dresses better than his master. Consequently, each individual master and mistress have not one or two, but at least thirty natural enemies to contend with, who deliberate upon their discomfiture in everything at least twice a day, if not more often. Their meeting-place, their club, is the concierge's lodge; that is, if the concierge be on friendly terms with them. If not, the master and mistress's lives become a greater burden still, because they are taken between the cross-fires of the two contending parties.

The miseries the concierge can inflict must be left to another chapter. They are very great; not so terrible, however, as the martyrdom one's own servants can make one suffer. It may be taken for granted that, with the exception of the cook, the trained servant, as we understand her, does not exist in France, and least of all in Paris. In the smallest English village one finds girls, respectably brought up, who, in spite of the growing attractions of factory life, have made up their minds that service will be their lot until they can get a chance of being suitably or unsuitably married. The parson's, the doctor's or the lawyer's wife gives them their first tuition, and, as the parson's, the doctor's, or the lawyer's wife is generally more or less a gentlewoman, though she may not be overburdened with means, the girl gets an inkling of how to sweep a room, to lay a table, and to make herself handy in a general way. Now and then she takes the bit between her teeth and goes off to London in search of adventures, but more frequently she becomes and remains a useful servant, notwithstanding her drawbacks of temper and carelessness. Her parents are probably small tradesmen, or artisans, or farm labourers living in the village where she was born and obtained her first situation; her vision in life, as I have said, is bordered by the marriage tie, and a family of her own. Of course, there are exceptions, such as the heroine of Ouida's "Puck," who dreams of being arrayed in silks and satins the moment she can think of anything; but it may safely be asserted that, out of every hundred girls in the English provinces who go wrong,

ninety fall victims to temptation. The ambition to become a fine lady—Heaven save the mark!—has little or nothing to do with their first mistake. They are inveigled by some one in their own or above their own station in life, and they follow him to London; but as for going there by themselves with the deliberate intention of leading an immoral life, such a thing is not dreamt of in their everyday philosophy. They may wish for a situation in town to better themselves, but before engaging upon the journey thither, they will insert an advertisement in the papers, or communicate with friends in order to make sure. Not so the French girl who has been taken from the fields to become a domestic servant. If she be very plain and ill-favoured, the knowledge will tend to develop the vice from which the whole of the peasant class throughout France suffer —greed. She will save and scrape every penny to get herself a dowry; but the mania will gain upon her, and, by the time she has accumulated the money, marriage will no longer be thought of—her great ambition will be to increase her hoard. In nine cases out of ten, her service in the country has taught her nothing; she is scarcely aware of the social difference between herself and her employers, and, notwithstanding her constant use of the third person singular in addressing these, she is very frequently absolutely wanting in respect to them. She does not offend deliberately, but from ignorance. A friend of mine—the wife of an eminent professor of singing—there is no need to withhold her name, it is Madame Giovanni Sbriglia—engaged a

servant from the country, and, two days after her arrival, found her violently ringing the bell in the dining-room. "What are you ringing for?" was the natural question. "I am ringing for madame, I want to speak to her," was the answer. "When madame wants me, she rings for me." It was with the greatest difficulty that my friend succeeded in convincing her that the argument only applied on one side.

Cleanliness is not the besetting sin of the French middle classes—I am speaking of personal cleanliness,—and least of all where such cleanliness is simply to be indulged for its own sake. A moment's reflection will tell the reader what I mean; but, whether or no, I cannot explain everything. In the large towns there is a great show of drapery and knickknackery about the middle-class homes, and Madame d'Escarbagnas herself, whether old or young, is profuse in her ablutions; her *lingerie* is absolutely the prettiest and best she can afford, "parce que on ne sait jamais ce qui peut arriver." But those of her sex in the smaller centres who are no longer buoyed up with the hope of such a possible pleasant contretemps, and the male sex in general who are past provoking such accidents, do not trouble much about these things. The hundred and one contrivances that make English provincial and country life agreeable and comfortable are not known, or, if known, are tacitly ignored; firstly, on the score of economy; secondly, on the score of indifference. The appointments of the table in the smaller centres are either pretentious or ridiculously primitive. Cruets there are of a kind, but

to get at their contents one has to use one's knife. The pepper is put into a salt-cellar, the salt itself in a similar one, but the spoon wherewith to take it is conspicuous by its absence, and so is the dessert spoon. Should a tart or sweet be served, you will be gravely presented with a knife and a teaspoon to convey it to your mouth. As for the fruit knife and fork, one rarely sees these in any but the best-appointed houses or restaurants. And even there I have heard thoroughbred Frenchmen, and men of the world to boot, sneer at their use. "Your countrymen's hands must be very unsavoury that they scruple to touch a pear or a peach with them," said a friend of mine once. As for changing your knife and fork between every dish, except among the very best classes, the custom is more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Hot water, even in the middle of the winter, is a rarity; it is very seldom laid on as with us: but should you be fortunate enough to get some, there will be just sufficient to dip your fingers in.

Of course, the reader will please to remember that throughout I am speaking of modest, middle-class life, not of the luxurious upper-class existence, though even in the latter there is more show than real comfort. But there is very little of the wealthy mode of life in the provinces, unless it be in large centres, such as Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux, or in the country mansions of the old noblesse or the nouveaux riches, and it is from the country proper and smaller centres that the female domestic servant is recruited.

I pointed out just now the motives that sway the French country girl, not endowed with good looks, to seek service in the capital. It is more difficult to hint at things which Englishmen and Englishwomen, though they know these things to exist, tacitly avoid discussing in public. But no writer wishing to give an approximately faithful picture of French, and especially of Paris home-life can afford to ignore the cankering worm that eats deep into that home-life among all classes. If he do, he will be very much like the proverbial showman who forgot to put a light into his magic lantern. He knew the slides by heart, but for want of that candle, the spectators were as wise or as ignorant after his exhibition as they were before it. Let it be stated at once then, that, densely benighted as are the peasant populations and the dwellers in the smaller towns, the knowledge that female comeliness finds a profitable market in Paris is one among the few things they do know. I have always suspected that the heroine of Ouida's "Puck," to whom I alluded just now, was modelled on a French, not on a Cumberland original. I am neither straitlaced nor puritanical enough to close my eyes wilfully to things that are, but in my many travels from one end of England and Scotland to the other, I have never yet met with a girl who, from her earlier years, deliberately harboured the wish to go to the bad for the sake of finery and a luxuriously idle life. Avoidable circumstances may have had a good deal to do with her downward career, but she started with the intention of being honest. Not a hundred pessimists

will shake this conviction with regard to England; not a thousand optimists will make me adopt that opinion with regard to France.

As I have already said, the domestic is recruited from the country proper, and from the smaller burghs. I doubt whether there are in the whole of Paris two thousand female servants who were born and bred in the capital. The born and bred Parisian has an invincible repugnance to menial service. One winter, during which there were several heavy snowfalls, I took it into my head to get some rough statistics with regard to the origin of the people employed by the municipality to clear the streets. The reader may be aware that that part of the municipality's duties is very quickly and efficiently done, especially in the wealthier quarters. At any rate, a great many men are employed. There was not a single Parisian among the seven or eight hundred of whom I inquired, and scarcely a Frenchman. They were nearly all Germans or Swiss. I remarked upon this to one of the overseers. "The Germans do not mind the humiliation; in fact, why should they?—they are born slaves," he said to me in a somewhat offensive manner. Then he softened. "And if the Parisians were to offer themselves, we should prefer the others; we get more work out of them."

To return to the female servant. "Ever since a village girl, who went out as a servant, came back to her native place in a silk dress, and with a gold watch, the provinces cry in vain for domestics." Thus writes M. Aurélien Scholl, whose truths are none the less

valuable for being often conveyed in the wittiest of paradoxes, and the most trenchant of epigrams. François Millet, the painter of "L'Angelus,"—who was neither witty, paradoxical, nor epigrammatic,—who, in fact, except for his genius, was scarcely above the social status of the peasants whom he painted,—who lived among them all his life,—went deeper to the root of the evil one day, and in one single sentence. He was standing before one of Jules Breton's scenes of peasant life. "Ça des paysannes," he said, with a somewhat contemptuous smile; "ça des paysannes; oui, ce sont des paysannes qui ne restent pas au village." He was right: the handsome, or merely good-looking peasant girl, if poor, does not remain in the village. Why should she? She knows well enough that, however good-looking, marriage with any but the poorest labourer is out of the question; and she knows, furthermore, that such a marriage means simply constant toil and hardship, or else the production of more than the regulation number of children, in order to feed the offspring of the well-to-do with her milk. All this may seem very shocking to the Englishman and American; but I repeat, these things are. All the accusations by squeamish and insufficiently informed critics against Zola's terrible realism will not alter the fact that he has exaggerated nothing, that his marvellous picture of "La Terre" is true from beginning to end. If they, the critics, doubt my word, let them dip into Balzac's "Paysans," into George Sand's "François le Champi," and "La Petite Fadette," and they will find that even

the latter's idealism is bound to admit certain facts, which, stripped of the glamour of romance, cause one to think and to ask one's-self whether the improvidence of the English agricultural classes is not ten times better than the frugality and thrift of the French.

No, the French peasant-girl, if comely, does not remain in her native village. She goes to Paris, ostensibly on service bent; she takes service, and remains in it for some time—until she can feel her feet. We will put aside for a moment the novelist who is supposed to write mainly for effect. No such suspicion rests on the late M. Taine. Listen to what he says: "In France a housemaid in her inmost heart thinks herself the equal of her mistress. 'I am just as intelligent, just as good-looking as she. If I had but her dresses, I'd soon show people,' she says. And, in fact," adds M. Taine, "in six months a suitable lover rubs their native mud off them; they learn everything, even to spell. As for smart repartee, it is in them from their birth; and as for sentiment, they are nearly always on a level with their mistresses."

From personal observation I can agree with M. Taine in everything but the spelling; nevertheless, one must admit that, even with that reservation, his remarks are not flattering to the mistresses. I should be loath to say that these remarks are untrue with regard to the mistress. The mistress has probably not had her cunning developed; the maid has. The sordidness of her life, the grinding avarice she has witnessed around her from the moment she could form any notion at all,

has simply made her receptive to one lesson above all others—viz. that money is everything. The writers of the Rousseau school would fain still make out that the lower classes are angels, the upper ones devils; that the females of the former fall an easy prey to the males of the latter. They still quote the statistics of Parent-Duchatelet to show that nine-tenths of the fallen women in France started as domestic servants, and the Dictionnaire Larousse, *pour le besoin de sa cause*, which is the sowing of Republican doctrines through thick and thin, follows in the same obsolete track, instead of examining the question philosophically and statistically. Strange to say, those who have the least pretension to deal with weighty matters in a serious manner, have given us a glimpse of the real truth now and then. I am alluding to some of the dramatists. The original authors of *Betsy* and *Peril*, as distinct from the adapters, have not exaggerated when they showed us the maid at work upon the affections of the young hopeful of the family. I shall probably refer to this again when treating of children.

It is undoubtedly true that the innocent lamb of the Republican writers, who—the lamb—is thrown among a pack of wolves to slave and to toil for a mere pittance, with the additional prospect of being wrecked body and soul by one of the he-wolves, whether young or old,—it is undoubtedly true, I say, that that innocent lamb only exists in the writers' imagination. The pittance, it may be stated at once, consists of between fifty and sixty francs a month, short of which it is well-nigh

impossible to get a girl who will even pretend to do her work. In small and not very affluent families she performs the functions of a general servant, and does the cooking as well. Her kitchen, it should be said, is not an earthly paradise. It generally looks upon a backyard, and is uncomfortably small. Of the neatness that prevails in the kitchen of a decent English household I have never seen a sign, even among my friends, who all pretend to be a cut above the ordinary middle-classes. The bright dresser, with its dinner and breakfast services coquettishly arranged, is conconspicuous by its absence; there would be no room for it, so the crockery is stowed away in some cupboard, washed or unwashed, until it is wanted. Coal being very expensive, even at ordinary times, gas is generally used for cooking purposes, except where the cook is a real, though entirely obscure *cordon bleu*, in which case she not only refuses to cook on gas but on coal as well, and will only use wood or charcoal, and turf if she can get it. At any rate, the kitchen-boiler is rare, and, consequently, hot water for ablutionary purposes, rarer still. The bath-room does not exist as a home institution. The bath, if imperatively wanted at home, is, together with the hot water, brought from a neighbouring public bathing establishment on a cleverly contrived vehicle, either drawn by hand or horse, but striking terror into the uninitiated observer, who, at the first glance, mistakes it for a small fire-engine. But, in justice to them, be it said, the Parisians—by which I mean the inhabitants of the capital

in general—are assiduous frequenters of the public baths. A clever writer of the last generation, Nestor Roqueplan, said that the pretext of going to the baths or to confession was a powerful weapon in the hands of the Parisienne, who was not squeamish about her own part in maintaining the integrity of the seventh commandment, and that it was not fair to restrict her liberty by building bath-rooms in every apartment. Whether the argument prevailed or not with the architects of the palatial mansions introduced at the beginning of the Second Empire, I am unable to say; certain it is that the bath-room is still a rarity in French apartments of even considerable rent.

Consequently when hot water is wanted it has to be boiled in a saucepan over the stove, and the quantity seems always ridiculously small to an Englishman.

To return once more to the kitchen. The cleanly scrubbed boards, covered with matting, oilcloth, or strips of carpet, are replaced by a red-brick floor, cool enough in the summer, but bitterly cold in the winter. Of a back kitchen there is not the faintest trace. As a matter of course, the water-tap—if the house is fortunate enough to have water laid on on every floor, which even nowadays is not always the case—the water-tap, with its sink beneath, is in the kitchen itself—an arrangement scarcely conducive either to visual or olfactory joy. Coals have to be fetched from the cellar, not on a level with the apartment, but, as one may imagine, five or six stories down. Lifts for that purpose being quite as rare as bath-rooms, a store of coal has

to be kept in the kitchen itself, especially in families where there is only one servant kept; hence, a kind of sailor's locker takes up a great deal of room where scarcely any can be spared.

Of the decoration and ornamentation of the kitchen it is almost a farce to speak. The small, bare, deal table remains bare all the year round. I have never yet seen an ordinary French servant lay a cloth for her own dinner. This is not to be wondered at, inasmuch as, even in restaurants by no means low-priced, the food is served on marble slabs, scrupulously clean, but marble slab for all that. At the Bouillons Duval and kindred establishments one pays, not only for one's napkin, but for the napkin for the table, if it be wanted. As for hanging pictures, or coloured wood-engravings from the illustrated weeklies, either framed or unframed, about her kitchen, the girl who would attempt such a thing would probably be laughed at by her friends, if not by her mistress.

Upon the whole, then, the kitchen of a moderately sized French apartment may be pronounced the reverse of comfortable, and the girl gets out of it whenever she can, either to her own room at the top of the house, or else downstairs to have a gossip with the concierge—that is, if the concierge has not become too grand a creature to hob-a-nob with servants, which is not an unusual thing at present. In many houses the concierge keeps a servant. But if the concierge is not available, the girl's fellow-servants are. Other means of gossiping are even nearer at hand. The girl has only

to open her kitchen window, which opens into a well, by courtesy called a yard. The window brings her into communication with the other kitchens of the building, and the conversations thus heard are not always of the most edifying nature; in fact, one must be as daring as Zola to reproduce them—yea, as a lesson on French home life.

At the first blush the frequent absence of the housemaid from her kitchen in order to gossip with her fellow-servants may seem an evil; it is a blessing when weighed against her constant presence there, whether alone or in the company of a cook and a male servant. The middle-class English matron who would object to Mary Ann practising her scales or rehearsing any of the sentimental or comic ditties of the day would probably be obeyed by her servant—not without grumbling, but obeyed for all that, although the kitchen in a moderately sized middle-class house is not very near the drawing- or dining-rooms. The French mistress who would interfere with the vocal self-training of her maid in a kitchen which, generally speaking, is but a few steps from where she sits, would expose herself to an impertinence and perhaps to a far from flattering comment on her own practising on the piano. In this, as in many other questions, the gospel of equality, which bids fair to supersede all other teachings in France, enters into play. A few years ago an English barrister and a very fair musician, while staying at the house of a French friend in Paris, thought he would like to have an hour's practice in the drawing-room, which happened to be occupied at the time either by the whitewashers or the

painters. He sat down to the instrument, and was at first very attentively listened to, the workmen ceasing their own performance of operatic and other ditties with which they had accompanied their labours. Before long, however, they became tired of their merely passive part in the entertainment, and, after sundry criticisms on the Englishman's method, they politely asked him to play the accompaniment to the duet from *Masaniello*. They really saw nothing presumptuous in the request, and our friend, being in Rome, did as they do in Rome, and humoured their whim. In another moment the concert was in full swing, and, when the Englishman's host and hostess returned, they found him engaged in an animated discussion about the respective merits of the music of many lands, interrupted every now and then by the performance of snatches of that music on the piano. The work had been left to take care of itself.

Even so; it is no uncommon thing to hear the mistress's piano accompanied by the voice of the male servant in the kitchen, or her solo emphasized by the cook; for the chances are that these two servants have had their provincial *gaucherie* rubbed off by a long stay in the capital or a large provincial centre. More often, while perfect silence reigns in the mistress's room, the kitchen will resound with a music-hall song or a sentimental romance, performed as a duet or a trio. Serious objection would be useless; remonstrance would be construed into a tyrannic and aristocratic interference with the sacred principles of "liberty, fraternity, and equality."

That same feeling, "that one woman is as good as another," and that, if she be not, she ought to make herself look as if she were, has banished, to a great extent, the nice white caps French servants used to wear. Cooks still wear them, to a great extent, but, as a rule, cooks are not very young; the young housemaid, with a receptive and imitative disposition, has almost entirely adopted the garb of her mistress; and not only when taking her walks abroad, but while attending upon her mistress at home. Between the mistress's coiffure and the maid's there is often very little difference —such as there is, is in favour of the maid. The English matron, who will not suffer Jane or Mary to wear a fringe, whose "Jane, where's your cap?" sounds sternly from the passage to Jane who is cleaning the doorstep, —that English matron would raise her hands in holy horror at the coiffure of Jane's French compeer. The knots are twisted at the top of the head, the mistress' *real* tortoise-shell comb is imitated in some cheap material, and Jane's head, after six months' exposure to the air of Paris, looks often prettier than madame's. The remainder of French Jane's dress is of a piece with Jane's head. In cut and material it is modelled upon that of her mistress; the only perceptible difference to the untrained male eye, being Jane's very pretty white-frilled apron, which, if anything, is an advantage to Jane, if Jane had but the sense to know it. Of print gowns in the morning, of plain black ones in the afternoon, there is no question with Jane. With the exception of the nurse, no female servant in Paris

wears a distinctive dress, except a few peasant girls from Brittany or elsewhere, and as those from Brittany are generally ugly enough to make one wonder, the eye does not gain much by the change.

I may have occasion to say something more of the housemaid in connection with furniture. At present I would devote a few words to the cook, who, as a rule, is not quite so smart a creature, either in intention or in result, as her fellow-servant. The cook belongs to the positivist order of domestic philosophers. Harum-scarum notions, the mere craving for appearance and the rest, are nearly always conspicuously absent from her temperament. She is not supposed to concern herself with anything but her saucepans, whether empty or full. The division of labour which obtains in a middle-class English household, cook taking her share of the cleaning of the rooms, and even doing the doorsteps where only two servants are kept—that division, an English female friend, who has long been living in Paris, tells me is not known either in the capital or in the provinces. To begin with, in Paris there are no doorsteps to clean; secondly, cook has quite enough to do to attend to her own business. With regard to her culinary attainments, opinions are divided, and I may be able to give a casting vote when I come to discuss the question of food; at present I am only concerned with her private virtues, the private virtues which were so utterly indifferent to the Scotch old lady, who preferred the art of cooking collops to respectability. It may be stated at once, that drink, the besetting sin of her English analogue, is not

that of the French cook. As far as I know, there are no temperance or teetotal societies in France. Drunkenness is, no doubt, on the increase, but, though on the increase, it has as yet not reached the pitch which Zola described in his "Assommoir," and that book was written nearly twenty years ago. I fancy I know Paris as well as, if not better than, M. Zola, but his Coupeau is still an exception, and a drunken woman almost a phenomenon. During the last ten years, I have perhaps seen two or three instances of intoxicated females, and not one of these three tiplers belonged to the servant class. There are orgies in fast life, but they are quite different things from the tippling before public-house bars, and the clandestine drinking by women that prevails in England. I have given the cook the only redeeming quality I could possibly award her, at the outset. Save for that one redeeming quality, sobriety, she is a creature full of faults. Unpunctuality is so chronic with her, that punctuality would be considered as unpunctual. She is a tyrant, and her sway is undisputed, not only by her mistress and master, but by her fellow-servants, save by the housemaid perhaps. But the manservant, except in the case of sweet, endearing intercourse, submits to it; and, what is more, the concierge, who fears no one in the house, takes great care to propitiate the cooks. Cooks' dishonesty has become proverbial, it has become immortalized in a French locution—"Faire danser l'anse du panier"—which is almost untranslatable. It means that she makes a profit on all she buys. In ordinary households the marketing is done in a way

different from that which prevails in England. There are large markets in almost every quarter of Paris, and, with the exception of groceries, everything is bought—mind, not ordered—by the mistress of the house, either alone, or accompanied by the cook, and carried home by them. That cook receives a halfpenny in each franc from every tradesman with whom she deals, is so well-known and established a custom, as to render opposition to it perfectly useless. A fault indulged by every one becomes, after all, merely a venial affair. But the cook levies blackmail besides, in a hundred different ways. She is in league with most of the market people, and whether her mistress goes out alone to buy her provisions, or accompanied by her, their cost will not be diminished. Whether young and pretty, or old and ugly, which is most often the case—the cook has but one aim in life—to save money. Her great ambition is to "establish herself"—read, "to get married"—and to set up a restaurant or a wine-shop for herself. As often as not her projects miscarry, and she and her savings fall a prey to some vagabond who speculates on her credulity and affection; for hardfisted, scraping, unscrupulous, and impertinent as she may be with her employers, the cook is a tender-hearted creature enough when her feelings are worked upon by some good-for-nothing but handsome youngster, who generally makes a fool of her. In that case she begins again, and the mistress suffers. Of the male servants, including the *frotteur* and errand-man, I will treat in my next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

Home-life (continued)—The manservant more general in France than in England—The system is undergoing a gradual change in hotels and *maisons meublées*, owing to the influx of foreign, but especially English, visitors—The *maison meublée*—The police and the *maisons meublées*—The *femme de ménage*—The concierge; how she influences the whole of Paris home life—The concierge not the servant of the tenants—The real and ideal French manservant—The *frotteur*—The concierge once more—Utterly unnecessary, if the French would but see it—The concierges as a married couple—Their duties—One's neighbours in a French house—Landlord and tenant—Various degrees of concierges—The salary of the concierge; what she has to do for it—Her duties—Her children.

THE manservant is more general in France than in England. I am not referring just now to the page-boy, to buttons, who in France is called a groom—but to the grown-up manservant, the *valet-de-chambre*. In England his presence in a family implies a certain affluence; in France this is not necessarily the case. There is scarcely a bachelor in Paris with an average income who has not a manservant, and in many instances the latter performs the work of a housemaid. Under those conditions a female domestic is rarely seen in the apartments, especially where the master does not dine at home, which

is the rule, though, of course, there are a great many exceptions. Until very recently, in the great many hotels and furnished houses (*maisons meublées*) with which the capital swarms, no female servant, save the cook, was ever met with. During the last thirty-five years, owing to the large influx of foreigners, and especially of Englishmen, accompanied by their womankind, the system has undergone considerable modification. English women, of course, objected to see a man potter about their bedrooms. French women, especially of the middle classes, took and take the matter as the most natural thing in the world, hence the system became so common that even now, after the introduction of many of our English habits, it still prevails in hotels exclusively frequented by French travellers, and there are still many such in the capital. In the furnished house, which is distinct from the ordinary hotel, the valet-de-chambre, or rather the *garçon d'hôtel* as he is called, still flourishes in all his glory. The maison meublée is an essentially French institution. It bears a certain likeness to the houses about Jermyn Street and St. James's, the proprietors of which live entirely by the letting of apartments to permanent lodgers; but it is not anything like the establishments met with in the by-streets leading from the Strand, which mainly accommodate visitors to London. The rooms in a maison meublée are rarely taken for less than a month. There are some single men in Paris, of all classes, who have never lived in a private lodging, or in rooms furnished by themselves. Private lodgings, or one or

two rooms taken in some one else's apartments, are met with, but the custom is by no means general. The letting of only one furnished room compels the owner of the apartment to keep a register, and to produce it for inspection by the police at any hour of the night or day. The inspection of these registers devolves upon a specially organized staff, which forms part of the Paris detective force. Now, a man may be the most honest creature in the world, and still object to the continual surveillance of such a meddling busybody institution as the Paris police, consequently he prefers to furnish a set of rooms, however humble, for himself, or, if he cannot do that, he goes to a regular furnished house, whereby he gains in comfort. From personal experience I may safely say that a man is better served in France by his own sex than by women, unless, if he happens to have his own furniture and cannot afford to keep a manservant, he happen to meet with a paragon in the shape of a *femme de ménage*—read "charwoman."

Such paragons are, however, very, very rare. As a rule the charwoman is a sloven and a slattern, and her ideas of cleanliness are, if developed at all, developed the wrong way. They reach their perfection if she has the management of a bachelor's quarters. If she ministers to a spinster or to a married couple who are both absent the whole of the day—which is by no means unfrequent—the knowledge that there is one of her own sex to control her doings when returning at night, may prove a kind of mild check to her vagaries. Where this is not the case, she indulges them to the

utmost. Under such circumstances the bachelor had better not look too closely into the many nooks and corners of his rooms; he had better be content to have an extra polishing brush handy to give an extra rub to his boots previous to his putting them on; he had better not examine too scrupulously his brush and soap trays: in fact, he had better remain wilfully blind to many things. Nor will changing his charwoman be of much avail. He is bound to fall from the frying-pan into the fire, besides being taken to task by his concierge, who objects to a frequent change, on the plea that too many strangers must not have the run of the house. The best thing for him is to employ the concierge if it can be managed. Not that he will be much better off with regard to the keeping in order of his household gods, but the bond of union between him and his Cerberus may still be productive of many little comforts in the way of getting the names of his callers during his absence, of getting his letters sent upstairs within a few hours of their arrival, of getting an errand performed without his being obliged to descend himself four or five flights of stairs and into the street, to look for the *commissionnaire*. That is, if his rooms happen to look upon the courtyard. Under no other circumstances is communication from a distance possible between himself and his concierge, for a bell providing such communication between each apartment and the porter's lodge has not as yet been thought of in the ordering of French houses. If it had been suggested it would have met with the greatest objection on the part

of the concierge. Not because she or he would deem it his or her duty to attend to its summons, but because it would disturb the comfort and quietude of the lodge. And, in fact, the concierge is not the servant of the tenants, but that of the proprietor of the house. The concierge has been placed in the situation in order to look after the landlord's interest, not after that of the tenants; and, truth to tell, the situation is by no means an easy one. The concierge is so important a personage in Paris home life, that nothing short of a very long chapter is required to treat of her or him. At present we are still concerned with the manservant. Unfortunately for himself and for his employers, the French manservant has been invested by the dramatists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with qualifications which only existed in the latter's imagination, but which have been perpetuated by the writers of the present day. The French manservant is a poor creature, as a rule; yet journalists and playwrights continue to depict him as the wittiest, the sharpest, and the most intriguing of all beings. According to these dramatists his power of repartee is enormous, his resources to extricate his master from the difficulties, in which he, the master, has got himself involved with or without the servant's aid, are unequalled. All this is so much fiction. Beyond his capacity for wearing his master's clothes or brushing them more or less carefully, for flirting with the housemaids, for rubbing a floor, and for being insolent or obsequious to his master's visitors, the French manservant is a French replica of the English Jeames.

His constant contact with his master makes him somewhat more independent, less deferential, for he knows many of the little secrets which are hidden from an English servant. In families he helps the housemaid, besides rubbing the floors. He serves at table, and assists in making the beds. With bachelors of the better class, he becomes the factotum; but it would be idle to suppose that he plays anything like the *rôle* assigned to him by Molière, Marivaux, and, least of all, by Beaumarchais.

The creator of Figaro immortalized an entirely fictitious being, who may have had some approximate counterpart in the society of the eighteenth century, but whose likeness will certainly not be found in that of our days. The most harebrained, jolly young bachelor of contemporary society would not dream of making his manservant his confidant. Why should he? The post is a safer messenger than he would be. The money-lender and bill-broker need not be approached with caution. Such devices as Scapin or Mascarille invented to make papa disgorge his money are old, stale, and inefficient. So much for his influence with a bachelor master, who looks upon him as a piece of furniture, and certainly does not mind whether he be there or not when he, the master, receives his mistress, be that mistress married or single. If he trusts him with his secrets at all, it is either because these secrets are of no value to the possessor, or else because the divulging of them would in no way affect the master's peace of mind. In a family the French manservant may have

a little more scope for eavesdropping or spying than his English congener, because he is constantly near his employers, and, in that way, enabled to pick up sundry bits of information.

The *frotteur* is essentially a Parisian figure, although nowadays he also operates in the large provincial centres. He may be seen in almost every house of the capital; for if the tenants do not employ him, the concierge does. He rubs down the stairs and the flooring of the rooms with a brush attached to his slippered feet. Slippers, a kind of diminutive saddler's claw, and a piece of yellow wax are carried in a small velvet bag. Said claw is screwed on to a ferruled stick, which does duty as a walking-cane in the frotteur's travels from house to house. The *commissionnaire*, or errand man, is a peculiar kind of being; his portrait will be found elsewhere.

If proof were wanted of the lack of initiative of the Parisian, it would be found in the latter's submission to the tyranny of his concierge, whom he invariably and cordially dislikes. The Parisian, who is invariably ignorant of institutions that flourish even within so short a distance as a sixteen or eight hours' railway journey from his city, is under the impression that large houses such as exist there could not possibly be inhabited decently, save under the ægis of the concierge. It has never struck him that the large blocks of chambers in the Temple and elsewhere, the flats of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and nowadays of London also, are, after all, nothing but English or Scotch likenesses

of his own enormous barracks, and that fires and other calamities do not occur more frequently in London than in Paris, notwithstanding the absence of the concierge. Mind, I do not say the housekeeper. No, it has not struck him; for the chances are a hundred to one against his knowledge of the existence of houses let out in flats in Edinburgh or London. His ideas of Scotland, if he have any ideas at all on the subject, are mainly derived from Boieldieu's "Dame Blanche," or from Donizetti's "Lucie de Lammermoor." Scott used to be popular when I was a boy; but one rarely sees a copy of his works now at the booksellers'. In fact, the Parisian's profound contempt for any and everything that goes on in foreign lands has prevented him from instituting comparisons, or from hitting upon some device whereby the concierge may be entirely done away with. No doubt there are difficulties with regard to such a reform, but they are by no means insuperable. The Parisian who, in the space of five minutes, would suggest half a dozen measures to overthrow a government he dislikes, has, as far as I know, never seriously entertained the thought of overthrowing his concierge. Of course, the very government which he invokes in and out of season, though ready to overthrow it, would have to help him in this; but the idea of applying to it has not as yet dawned upon his mind. In one word, he has never thought about it. To him the concierge is as much an unavoidable necessity as is his defective system of drainage, his ever-increasing town taxes, the hundred and one administrative and postal restrictions

put upon him; and he goes on grumbling, but submitting all the same. What would become of his letters, if the concierge were not there to take them in? The letter-box, save at the principal door of the building he inhabits, does not suggest itself to him. How would he get in if he came home late at night? It has not occurred to him that, in spite of the licensing laws of England and Scotland, there are belated and not strictly sober people who find their way up six flights of stairs in Pump Court, Middle Temple, and Buchanan Street, Glasgow; he does not know that those flights of stairs are kept clean in said Middle Temple and Buchanan Street, because, I repeat, he knows not of the existence of such spots. They are without his ken, and their distance lends contentment to his ignorance with regard to them. Consequently the concierge flourishes now as she or he has flourished for the last hundred years—for the institution is scarcely older than that,—as she will continue to flourish to the end.

One more little statement. For form's sake I have spoken until now of the concierge in the feminine or masculine gender, as my turn served; but for veracity's and convenience' sake I may drop the latter term: for, as a rule, the concierge only exists as a woman. She does not live in single blessedness: but, as a rule, her lord and servant follows a separate occupation; and even where he shares her duties, he only helps her for a few hours each day. There are few exceptions to this, unless it be in first-class houses, where the porter's lodge is sometimes kept by the sweet

couple in harmony united. In such mansions—for they are scarcely less—where fourth and fifth floor lodgers pay from £150 to £200 per annum, the tyranny of the couple often reaches a point which would make the freeborn Briton stand aghast. Revolt against it seems almost impossible, save on the penalty of the most miserable existence for three months; that is, if the tenant has given notice, which he is almost bound to do if his lease allows him. I have taken three months as the minimum; but it may happen that troubles break out a few days after quarter-day, in which case the sore trial, due to the never-relaxing hostility of the concierge, has to be borne for double that time. It is of no use complaining to the landlord, even if he could be got at; for he is almost certain to side against his tenant with his representative—for as such the concierge must be considered. The utmost concession one is likely to obtain is the arbitration of the landlord's steward; and though the summing-up may result in the tenant's favour, the verdict is sure to be given against him—I mean as far as the dismissal of the concierge is concerned.

Candidly speaking, one does not very well see what else the landlord or his steward can do. In a building occupied by a hundred or a hundred and fifty different persons at the lowest computation, the concierge is sure to displease some one, even if she were an angel in human form. If complaint on the part of a fraction of those inmates were to be invariably followed by dismissal of the concierge, there would be no peace for the

landlord; it is but fair and perfectly logical that he should prefer the "no peace" for his tenant. Hence it has become a well-known fact that the lodger's complaint goes for nothing—it is not even listened to; his notice, if he proceeds to extremities, is complacently accepted; there is barely an attempt to make him change his mind. The landlord knows perfectly well that his tenant will only go farther to fare worse; the tenant knows it also: hence the tyranny of the concierge is patiently borne. The friendly relations often existing between the landlord and tenant in England are entirely ignored here. It is very rare indeed that the tenant knows the landlord, unless the latter resides in the house, which is the case now and then. Even then the tenant may remain profoundly ignorant of the fact, unless accident discloses it to him. The most amiable people on the face of the earth, as the Parisians call themselves, are undoubtedly the most unneighbourly. One may live in a house for ten years and not know the name of his neighbour on the same landing, unless the gossip of the servants acquaints him with it. There is a tacit disinclination to fraternize, which almost amounts to monomania.

For full two years I happened to meet a man whose striking resemblance to a portrait I had seen in my youth puzzled me. One day I was ill-advised enough to inquire his name of the concierge. The next day I received a polite but freezing note, hinting that I had committed a breach of etiquette, which, in consideration of my foreign ignorance, was pardoned to me. The

writer turned out to be a schoolfellow of my maternal grand-uncle's, with whom I lived for a considerable time in Paris when I was a lad. As an apology for my supposed presumption, I sent him the sketch I found in my uncle's papers. Here the matter ended, for though I continued to meet him now and then on the staircase, the gift was never acknowledged by as much as a word. He was a Dutchman, who had become a Frenchman. The reason alleged—still to the concierge—was that it did not do to become acquainted with neighbours; that it generally led to unpleasant consequences. My uncle's schoolfellow is by no means an exception. But I have wandered away from my subject—the concierge, who, I cannot repeat it too often, is a very important personage in Paris home life. The reader, therefore, must not be surprised at the space I have devoted to her, seeing that her lodge is often not unlike a little court, where every one of the tenants, to say nothing of their servants, pays his unwilling respects. In fact, the servant can afford to be much more independent towards the concierge than the master: the reasons, I have already pointed out. There are many more decent situations in Paris than there are domestics to fill them, and the latter can change their places by giving a week's, or at the most a month's, notice. A well-corded trunk and a bonnet-box generally contain all her belongings. Consequently a row with the concierge is of no consequence to any of them, and they have been known to indulge in that diversion for the simple pleasure of vexing their employers, whom they still

further annoy by giving warning when once they have set the ball rolling between them and the concierge. In fact, there are a hundred more reasons than I have advanced for the kind of enforced consideration with which the concierge is treated. (Note: By *concierge*, I mean the female; the male I will distinguish by calling him the *consort*.) In the middle-class houses, of which these papers mainly treat, the consort counts for little or nothing. It is only in the very wealthy dwellings that he helps his wife. In those which are one or two degrees below the class with which I am dealing, the consort, though he does not help his spouse in the management of the house, remains at home during the day. In the one case, he is really the master, especially if he is coachman to one of the tenants; in the other case, he exercises the trade of jobbing tailor or cobbler, and concerns himself but little with anything else. But the consort of the middle-class concierge generally follows some genteel occupation, such as bank porter or timekeeper in a factory. I have known some who were clerks or warehousemen. I have known very few indeed that were artisans or working men. The latter have too great a contempt for the *pipelet*, as the male concierge is called, to enact willingly his *rôle*. The origin of the word is, I take it known to most readers of Sue's "Mysteries of Paris."

Whence this contempt for the concierge, male and female, which pervades not only the working classes, but their social superiors in every degree?. Is it deserved? Candour compels one to answer, "Yes."

The concierge's situation makes her, as it were, a spy: in ninety cases out of a hundred she does more spying than is required, even in her situation. Considering the work she does, she is wretchedly underpaid. In houses where there are five and twenty sets of apartments she receives £25 a year, besides being housed free of rent and gas. The building may consist of two blocks, each containing six flights of stairs, which have to be kept clean if of brick, polished if of wood. No woman, were she as strong as a lioness, is able to do the work. Hence, if the husband cannot assist her, she is bound to employ a frotteur, who will not come for less than 20 francs a month—say 240 francs a year: leaving her 360 francs a year, or a little over £14; out of which she has to provide brooms, brushes and pails to sweep and wash the yards, of which there are sometimes two. Add to this, that every letter, every parcel for any member of the twenty or twenty-five families that occupy the house is brought to her lodge; that every caller, if he be a stranger to the building, appeals to her for information; that the telegraph-boy, who is bound to deliver his message at the doors of the apartments themselves, wants to know the situation of the said apartments, etc.;—consider all this, and an approximate notion of the constant worry to which the concierge is exposed may be arrived at. Nor is this all. At nightfall the outer doors (*portes cochères*) of the building are closed, and have to be opened by the concierge. It is only very recently that pneumatic tubes for that purpose have been introduced.

Three-fourths of the Paris houses have still the old-fashioned system, resembling our obsolete bell-pulls, with this difference, that a greater amount of strength has to be applied to them in order to make the very heavy lock play. Even the most sober-minded Parisians, men and women, have an insuperable objection to retiring early. They are inveterate play-goers; consequently half of the inmates are, as a rule, still out at midnight. The concierge goes to bed by this time—sometimes a little before,—but she is disturbed at every moment, though she has not to get up, a bell-pull hanging by the side of her bed. At six or seven in the morning the house is alive; for on the upper floors there are generally half a dozen workmen or workwomen who depart early. She gets, therefore, very little rest during the night. In fact, her responsibility at any hour of the day and night is very great. Should a tenant leave his apartment without having paid his taxes, for which the proprietor of the house is held responsible, the concierge is sure to get a severe reprimand. I have known cases where she was called upon to refund part of the landlord's loss. Nor does her list of responsibilities end there. She is virtually under the surveillance of the police, and that very prying body expects her to act as a kind of coadjutor to them.

All this demands an enormous activity on the part of the concierge, and, if for no other reason, she would seem entitled to the respect which well-performed duty generally begets. If such consideration be withheld

generally, the reluctant conclusion must be that she herself is the cause. The burden imposed upon her is very heavy, and she becomes peevish and disagreeable in consequence. She is apt to play the tyrant at every opportunity, and is too prone to eke out her insufficient income by means which, if not absolutely dishonest, are not always strictly above board. The tenant, when paying his quarter's rent, generally gives her a tip; but he is in no way bound to do this. Should he, however, neglect to do it, the concierge is sure "to cut up rough," and her behaviour during the next three months will be far from pleasant. Until recently it was almost tacitly agreed that the concierge should receive a certain small share of the wine bottled by every tenant, and of the wood stored for the winter. The custom is falling into abeyance, and this curtailing of of the concierge's perquisites has not improved her temper. In short, look at the concierge whichever way we will, the fact stares one in the face that she is placed in the house for the extra security of the landlord, and for the undoubted annoyance of the tenants. Nevertheless, from them she derives the greater part of her support. Therefore, the feeling that they are not only submitting to a constant watch upon their doings, but that they are paying for this watch, is not calculated to improve the relations between them.

It may be safely said that a proprietor who was sufficiently inventive and liberal-minded to discard the concierge, and to hit upon the means of arranging the control of his house on a new plan, would earn the thanks of every

Parisian, and find a host of imitators. That this can now be done—I have not the least doubt that it will be done within the next fifty years—it is idle to hope. Meanwhile, the concierge flourishes in her lodge, which is generally a very spick-and-span place, especially in the newly built houses. She has a kitchen and a large room with a recess, in which stands the bed. The latter is, as a rule, the showpiece of the concierge's lodge. It is hung with bright cretonne curtains; a needlework counterpane is spread over it in the day time. The meals, of course, are taken in the living-room, to which every one has access. But there are houses in which the concierge has a third room at her disposal. In those cases, it may be taken for granted that she and her family are very well off, that the husband has some good employment, that the children are being educated above the stations of the parents. If girls, they are likely to become actresses, ballet-dancers, or singers; if boys, they will find a situation in the office or business place of one of the tenants of the house; and as they progress in life, the lodge will know them no more. But though I already have said a good deal, I have by no means exhausted the subject. Even in the middle-class houses there are endless varieties.

Henri Monnier, who, in common with Paul de Kock, did for Paris lower middle-class life what Dickens did for that in London, has given the world some sketches of the concierge, which are masterly incarnations of a vividly conceived ideal. If the concierge of Henri Monnier ever existed at all, it is very certain that she

does so no longer. You might go from one end of Paris to the other without finding the snuffy, slatternly, down-at-heel old woman, who in her youth had been a beauty and star at some minor Paris theatre; who had known Talma personally, and was for ever introducing recollections of him into her conversation. The slatternly old woman still exists in some houses; but, looking at her carefully, one soon comes to the conclusion that she is simply a very battered and torn edition of the young one. As a rule, however, in the houses we treat of, the concierge is by no means an untidy creature. She has probably been a sempstress or working girl; but not being endowed with much personal beauty or elegance of appearance, she has perforce been obliged to remain within an honest sphere of life, and to marry a postman, an inferior Custom House officer, a bank porter, or something of the kind. The reader need not take this remark as a mere piece of cynicism on my part. I would not willingly speak evil of the French nation merely in order to say something smart; but truth compels me to state that, during a great number of years of almost uninterrupted residence in France, I have known few young women, in the lower middle-classes, endowed with any personal attractions at all, who even pretended to be absolutely honest when they married, whatever they may have become afterwards. If proof were wanted of what I state, it would be found in the crowning of the *rosière* every year, which ceremony is an official recognition of chastity. And the concierge is recruited from the lower middle-classes.

Her husband has probably obtained the situation for her through some protector. What with her work and his, they make both ends meet; in many cases they are enabled to bring up their children comfortably, according to their notions. Once more, strict morality is almost out of the question, especially where there are girls. If the concierge's daughter be good-looking, she will soon find out for herself that her beauty is a marketable commodity. She knows, moreover, that, however good-looking she may be, a marriage in her own station of life, unless she has a *dot*, is almost out of the question.

There are only two professions in Paris in which a young woman who has to support herself can count upon, unless she make up her mind to starve, viz. that of a dressmaker or milliner in the higher branches, or that of the stage. She may become an ordinary dressmaker, a milliner, a shop girl—she would always be obliged to take "a friend" to eke out her income. This may sound very dreadful; the reader may accuse me of exaggeration. I am stating simple facts. Without giving names, I may mention a case that came under my notice very recently. I know two sisters, both very good-looking in their way: the one an artificial flower-maker; the younger one having no particular trade. Both speak English, French, and German fluently. The father, a clever painter and decorator, a Belgian by birth, but unfortunately of a roving disposition, has travelled much. In every one of his flittings he took his family with him. Of late they have settled in

Paris, and the girls naturally thought that their knowledge of foreign languages would be useful to them. The flower-maker might just as well be dumb for the benefit she derives from it. The younger sister managed to get a situation in a large milliner and dressmaker's in the Rue de la Paix, as a showwoman. The constant influx of foreigners, especially of English and American, made her valuable. As such she got sixty francs per month. The principal plainly told her that she would have to make up the shortcomings in another way, and that, being in the shop the whole day, she would soon find an opportunity of doing so. And assuredly the opportunity was not long in coming. I had lost sight of her and her sister for some months, when, only a few weeks ago, standing at the door of one of the principal hotels in the Avenue de l'Opéra, I saw the younger one coming along, beautifully and very expensively dressed in black silk. At the same time the manager of the hotel, to whom I was talking, left me. From the confidential way in which he took her arm, there could be no doubt as to their relations. Neither father, mother, nor employer could object; it is done by every one here.

But to return to my concierge, who as a rule is no longer young, though very often more comely than she was in her youth. Neither is she the draggletail nor the ignoramus some of the Paris writers would make her out to be. In the modern houses her appearance is quite in accordance with her situation. Nor is she altogether ignorant of literature. Of course she prefers the highly-spiced fiction which appears in the feuilletons

of the daily papers, but she does not quite believe the whole of it as gospel truth. Her credulity is considerably tempered by her experience. Her optimism, if ever she had much to start with, is constantly receiving terrible shocks—but scarcely shocks to her—from any and every one of the two hundred persons she comes in hourly contact with. Long before she occupied the present position she has been told and taught that there are but two things that rule French existence—money and women. She has no illusions about the young madame of the second or third floor. The experience gained in her former business tells that the dress young madame wears means about four or five months of her husband's salary; but she also knows that no part of that salary has paid for it. Her memory travels back in other respects. She remembers her young fellow-workwomen too well not to know the one who pays periodical visits to the single man in the entresol; albeit that the visitor comes with a band-box or parcel in order to account for her call. And every scrap of this knowledge influences her doings with her own daughters, with the result that she becomes like the Madame Cardinal M. Halévy has so amusingly described. But M. and Madame Cardinal are too important personages for the fag end of a chapter.

CHAPTER III.

The story of the Cardinal family according to M. Ludovic Halévy—Why I selected that story in illustration of my theme instead of a sketch of my own—The voucher for M. Halévy's absolute truth with regard to that story—M. de Persigny at the Cardinals'—Madame Cardinal—Her daughters—M. Cardinal and his son-in-law *de la main gauche*—Virginie Cardinal falls in love—Madame Cardinal's proposed antidote—M. Cardinal's dignity—M. Cardinal's politics—My own experience in such matters.

At the end of the previous chapter and in an unguarded moment, I allowed the names of Monsieur and Madame Cardinal to slip from my pen, in connection with a charge preferred against the concierges—and, for that matter, against a considerable majority of the lower middle-class Parisian women—of deliberately trafficking with their daughters' immorality. "Monsieur et Madame Cardinal" and "Les Petits Cardinal" are known to a very limited section of English readers, who, educated as they may be and experienced in matters of Parisian life, are still apt to look upon M. Ludovic Halévy's picture of that delectable family as an amusing skit rather than as a realistic presentment of the bare and uncontrovertible truth. Let me disabuse their minds at once, and state at the same time why, instead of giving an original sketch of my own, I prefer

to use that of the author of "L'Abbé Constantin." In the first place, it is because I do not wish the oft-repeated cry against me of animosity to the French reiterated in this instance; secondly, because M. Halévy's *tableau de genre* is superior to anything I could have produced in that way. I should have been sure to let my contempt run away with my pen, which error M. Halévy has carefully avoided. M. Halévy is French, and I am not; the things he looks upon as matters of course I still regard as too degrading for words, and this notwithstanding my semi-French education. Thirdly, M. Halévy presents himself, in this instance at any rate, with far better credentials; no one would suspect or accuse a Frenchman of systematically blackening the character of his own countrymen. Neither Frenchmen nor Englishmen are quite so unanimous with regard to my impartiality.

Now for the voucher for M. Halévy's absolute truth in the matter. M. Halévy began life as a Government employé, but when a young man has coursing in his veins the blood that produced a Fromenthal and a Léon Halévy, and is, moreover, in constant contact with the celebrities two such distinguished men are sure to have gathered around them, the odds are a hundred to one in favour of that young man's wishing to do something more interesting than indite analytical reports—read "summaries"—of the sittings of the Senate. That M. Halévy fostered that wish from his boyhood, there can be little doubt, but long before he acted upon it he began to prepare by collecting what were indeed "human

documents," and, what was perhaps better, collecting them at random, *sans parti pris*, as the French say, trusting to future opportunity to utilize these documents. He was in that respect unlike M. Zola, who first conceives his plot and then goes in search of evidence to support it. It is not my purpose here, though, to point out the different results accruing from the different methods.

M. Halévy was in the habit of roaming about the different quarters of Paris, notably about the most populous ones, and striking up acquaintance with all sorts and conditions of people. In that way he became the familiar of a fruiterer in a small way—the Madame Cardinal of the story—who had a pretty daughter in the *corps de ballet* at the Opéra, which was then situated in the rue Le Pelletier. Madame Cardinal's abode was near the Halles, and one day, when Halévy called, he found in the back shop, where mamma was preparing the dinner on a small stove, a gentleman of grave demeanour and appearance seated next to the daughter.

"Ah, vous voilà, jeune homme," said the middle-aged dame, in her motherly way. "Monsieur le Ministre, je vous présente un de nos amis, M. Ludovic Halévy. Monsieur Halévy, Son Excellence, Monsieur de Persigny, Ministre de l'Intérieur."

Neither Persigny nor Halévy budged nor winced, except to bow formally to one another; for Persigny's gravity was much less deep than that of Halévy, who is in reality very serious, and looks and looked even more serious than he is. They both knew one another, if not intimately, at least very well: for the summary-writer

of the Senate had often spoken to the Minister; the Minister, on the other hand, had often had occasion to consult the summary-writer. But they did not enlighten the fruiterer. When "Monsieur and Madame Cardinal" first appeared, M. Halévy, from motives of delicacy, refrained from revealing the source of his information; since then he has neglected to repair the omission, but he has often told the story of his meeting Persigny at the Cardinals', and on one occasion I heard it from his own lips.

When we are introduced to Madame Cardinal she is standing at the wings on the stage of the Grand Opéra, watching her second daughter, Pauline, who, like her elder sister Virginie, has entered the *corps de ballet*. Madame Cardinal is very strict indeed with her girls, in fact, so strict as to interrupt her conversation with you to run after Pauline to slap her face, because she has caught her kissing a Monsieur de Gallerand. Neither Pauline nor Virginie have until now been allowed to kiss any one, save with the permission of mamma, and this permission has only been granted after the due and careful examination of the intentions in the matter of settlements of the candidates for the kisses. Of course, though Pauline is but fifteen, and has only just been promoted to a place in the front quadrilles, there are already many such candidates, notably a Monsieur N——, who comes every week; but the girl cannot bear the sight of him, and Madame Cardinal is essentially a tender-hearted mother, who would not force her children's inclinations.

"I haven't the heart to bully her," she says; "besides, that is not a mother's duty. Yes," she continues, answering the compliment about her right sentiments in such matters. "Yes, my sentiments are what they should be. After all, what's the good of being in a hurry, I ask you? The girl will be prettier in another year than she is now."

Madame Cardinal does not add, "and consequently worth more money," but that is what she means. And why not? She had already bought one house at Batignolles with the wages of her elder daughter's immorality, why should she not buy a second with the proceeds of that of the younger? We will let her tell the story in her own words:—

"Virginie is an angel. Before leaving for Italy, she insisted that the marquis should provide very comfortably for us. Of course I need not tell you that the affair was treated directly through me, and that the dignity of Monsieur Cardinal did not suffer for a moment. . . . The morning after the departure of the marquis and Virginie, I said to Monsieur Cardinal, 'My dear, you do not happen to know a safe and profitable investment for a sum of thirty thousand francs?'

"'For a sum of thirty thousand francs?' he answered. 'I do not ask where you got that money from. I do not wish to know. But there is at this moment, owing to certain circumstances, a great fall in house property.... We'll take in the "Petites Affiches."' A week afterwards we bought, at Batignolles, a house which was very cheap at the price." Still, Monsieur

Cardinal does not display the least curiosity about the origin of the money. In fact, with the exception of managing the epistolary part of the business, Monsieur Cardinal remains in profound ignorance of what is going on. "He does not wish to know." When his daughter Virginie commits herself with a fifth or sixth-rate actor, and thus leaves her first protector, Monsieur Cardinal writes a most indignant letter in response to the love-plaint of the vile seducer. The epistle begins thus: "Sir,—It is an indignant father who replies to your favour of," etc. He does more than that; but we let Madame Cardinal again take up her own story.

"At any rate, Crochard [the actor] remained quiet, and Virginie seemed to think no more about it. Nevertheless, there was no news of Monsieur Paul [the first protector and predecessor of the marquis] other than ten thousand francs." (Monsieur Paul, when he discovered Virginie's infidelity, had taken up his hat and gloves, and sent ten thousand francs as a settlement of the whole affair.) "You'll say that it counted for something. I, from time to time, told Virginie to write to M. Paul. 'Yes,' she answered, 'to send him back the ten thousand francs.' Of course I did not press the matter, though I had a great mind to write to him myself. At last I consulted Monsieur Cardinal, who observed, 'There is something to be said for and against doing so; but, after all, it is not a mother's business to meddle with this. No, no; I'll write myself. But don't be afraid: Virginie's name will not be so much as mentioned; it will be a letter from one gentleman to another. I shall say to

Monsieur Paul how much I regret that circumstances beyond my control should have interrupted our pleasant relations, etc.' And," adds Madame Cardinal, "he did write. But no answer came. A month passed like this, and we felt very lonely, you know, when one is in the habit of seeing friends and society. It was, above all, Monsieur Cardinal who complained, who said from morning till night, 'How dull the place is! How solitary we are!' He went to the café at night instead of staying at home with us and with M. Paul."

As may be imagined, Virginie Cardinal is not long without receiving offers to replace M. Paul. But the recollection of Crochard stands between her and the new aspirants for her favours. She does not say a word about him, lest she should get her face slapped by her mother, or a sound thrashing from her father, who only interferes actively on such occasions. However, she gets wan, pale, and thin; she does not make "her points" so cleverly as heretofore, and the mother becomes alarmed lest the goose with the golden eggs should die. "My dear, you must not give way like that," says Mamma Cardinal. And Virginie takes her advice. She chooses the most ugly of all her admirers, a certain Marquis Cavalcanti, to whom she writes a letter in answer to his offer, asking her mother to take it to him. Mamma, however, goes and consults papa first, as on all important occasions. And papa delivers himself as follows: "It is not right that Virginie should address a gentleman whom she does not know; it would be very improper. I will write myself." So said, so done;

though the letter was by no means an easy one to write. "Never mind; it's my duty"—it is still Madame Cardinal who speaks. "Little as you may think it, Monsieur Cardinal has a deal of tact in certain delicate circumstances. On that occasion he did not broach a word about Virginie; he took matters from a very elevated standpoint; he wrote as from one gentleman to another."

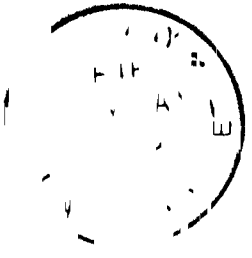
M. Cardinal's note has the desired effect of bringing the Marquis Cavalcanti to the house on the following morning. The aspirant protector of the daughter makes the unpardonable mistake of plunging into business details at once before the papa, whereupon the latter stops him indignantly, and retires there and then to leave the final conclusion of the treaty to his better half. It need scarcely be said that she concludes it to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. The Cardinals will not separate from their offspring, consequently the marquis consents, or rather, is forced, to live with them. The apartment has, however, two issues, so that M. Cardinal's scruples with regard to untimely meetings with his "temporary son-in-law" may be respected. Amusing as is the picture of the political quarrels between the marquis, who is naturally a Legitimist, and Monsieur Cardinal, who afterwards becomes a judge of the peace during the Commune, it is not my purpose to dwell upon it, nor upon any further phase connected with the Cardinal family. My introduction of them has served its purpose by this time—namely, to show the reader the unblushing support the parents in certain classes of

life give to the immorality of their children. Again, let it not be thought that M. Halévy has exaggerated or invented. As I have stated already, if anything, he has remained far below the very ugly truth. M. Halévy is not a writer of the Zola school, who thinks that realism or naturalism means only one thing; which is, to make his personages and their actions as unpalatable and repulsive as possible. M. Halévy paints what he sees; but he mixes his colours with a certain amount of goodnatured indifference. As to the moral lesson of the picture, which prevents the whole from drying up too dark, I myself had occasion for at least three years to observe the conception, planning, and execution of a "Cardinal arrangement," which only differed from that I have related in not being quite so successful—perhaps because there was no papa to conduct the correspondence. The mamma had been for many years in England; the girl herself was exceedingly beautiful, and spoke English like a native: but truth compels me to state, and I do so very gladly, that neither of them had a drop of English blood in their veins. I could multiply almost indefinitely the instances that have come under my personal notice of parents trafficking with their daughters' dishonour. Whether the upshot of this traffic be a legitimate union, and intended to be such, or merely a temporary and more lucrative *liaison*, the traffic itself is equally disgusting to me. I fail to see the difference between the Madame Josserand of Zola's novel, the Madame Cardinal of Halévy, and the heroine of a book published

about ten years ago, "Madame Alphonse," the very name of whose author has escaped me. The three mothers are to my mind only so many procuresses, whether they ply their trade in silks and satins, the more homely cashmere, or the absolutely plebeian print gown. Nor is my estimate of the proceeding in any way influenced by the fact of the girl having, as in many instances she has, a dowry. That, if anything, is an aggravation of the offence from a mental and moral, though perhaps not from a material point of view. I might find extenuating circumstances for a Madame Cardinal, with whom money is everything; whose youth and early womanhood have been passed amid grinding sordid poverty; who has pinched and scraped to give the girls, whom she afterwards sells to the highest bidder, the food, clothing, and tuition she thought best for them. Yes, extenuating circumstances. Madame Cardinal may be no more responsible for her actions than the hereditary monomaniac who commits a murder. Her absolute want of moral perception may be as great as the latter's. There are hundreds of people who are colour blind, and no one notices the defect of their physical organization until a painting comes to be discussed. There are thousands of people whose moral education is so thoroughly defective that virtually they may be held irresponsible for their actions. Let these people commit a murder or a robbery, and their legal defender, supported by some professors of medical jurisprudence, will soon point out to the judge and jury the mental shortcomings of the prisoner in the dock. But short

of murder or robbery those people's sanity is never called in question, though they may commit as many moral and mental robberies and murders as they like. That is what I mean by extenuating circumstances, and I would give such people as Madame Cardinal the benefit of them to a certain extent. I would not extend this leniency to those above her in station, whose religious teaching has been carefully attended to, whose views of good and evil have never been warped by bodily want. And it is those with whom I deal in these papers. Madame Cardinal and her husband were merely the peg on which I wished to hang my transition periods, when, from the discussion of servants, I intended to proceed to the chapter on children's education. That this education is lamentably deficient in France—that there is probably no nation, whether great or small, so egregiously ignorant as the French, I shall have no difficulty in proving. And when I speak of ignorance, I do not mean ignorance of book learning only. I mean ignorance of everything that makes the man a valuable member of society; the woman a valuable helpmate of man. It is not his conscious and punctual payment of rates and taxes, his nontransgression of the criminal laws of his country, his scrupulous attention to political and municipal duties, that makes man a good citizen. All these are but negative qualities, after all. A man may never be an hour behindhand with his contributions to the revenue; he may never have had the policeman's hand on his shoulder; he may have been the first to knock at the door of the polling-booth,

the last to leave the church porch,—and he may be as valueless an item in the great social fabric as if he had never existed. A woman may be an excellent cook; her hearth may be clean and tidy, her children trim and spruce; she herself be as coquettishly dressed as her means will afford; she may go to mass every morning, and present her husband with a new babe every year,—and she may still be as little the complement of her husband, from a social—which means from an æsthetical and ethical—point of view, as Biddy the housemaid or Margaret the charwoman. This attainable perfection of both man and woman, this training of the two into valuable citizens, is only possible under one condition—namely, of its beginning in their very infancy, with or shortly after the mother's milk. How the first years of a child's life among the lower classes are passed in France I may endeavour to show later on. I will first speak of the boys and girls' schooldays, in order to prove that, if any system of public and private education be calculated not to attain the desired effect, it is assuredly the French system.



CHAPTER IV.

The Cardinal-speculation and its basis—The French youth and his accredited mistress—The philosophy of "Bébé" (Betsy)—The French public-school system and its attempt to counteract the evil—Humiliating surveillance—What the system really is—The uniform, and its effect upon the younger and elder pupils—The school and its discipline—The food—Recreation—The masters; the *pion* or usher in general—The attempts to introduce athletic sports—"Tom Brown's Schooldays" and "Jacques Vingtras"—The French schoolboy apparently more docile than the English; apparently only—The French schoolboy from a physical point—Results.

It may be taken for granted that the Cardinal damsels and their parents, contemptible as they are, would soon find their level if the elder were not perfectly certain that there exists a market for the younger. And it must not be imagined that the buyers or hirers in this market are all old or middle-aged men, or even men in the prime of life. The youths of France and, above all, of Paris, would think it a slur upon their dawning manhood if, at the age of twenty-one or two, they had not an accredited mistress. The exception to this rule is so rare that the authors of "Bébé," which, under the title of "Betsy" and more or less Bowdlerized, was performed with such marked success at the Criterion

Theatre, eagerly caught at the phenomenal exception of a lad of twenty being comparatively free from a *liaison* outdoors, to build a piece upon it, the teaching of which piece is calculated in reality to throw ridicule upon such parents as would endeavour to guard their sons from that kind of association. Nay, more, I could name half a dozen plays in which the father distinctly recommends the son to undergo a certain apprenticeship in illegitimate love, lest, as Monsieur Fourchambault, in the late M. Augier's piece, points out, he should commit "the greatest of all immoralities, which is, to marry a dowerless girl." As may be imagined, the young man—the lad—is not slow to avail himself of the opportunity so temptingly offered, and before he has fairly left school he is already in the toils of some young girl of his own age, a sempstress or working girl, if not worse.

The only effective remedy which the French educational system has been able to suggest against this premature debauch is so ridiculous, that, if it were not for authenticated facts, one would hesitate to insist upon it, lest one should be accused of exaggeration. I lived for a long while opposite one of the greatest public colleges in Paris, the College Rollin. I was partly aware of the so-called rules and regulations with regard to the pupils; but did not know that a young man of twenty was not allowed to leave the school on Sunday morning for the day without "being fetched" by one of his relatives or friends, and without being taken back in the evening in the same way. I

thought that boys over fourteen were exempt from this preposterous and, I may add, humiliating surveillance. I was mistaken. I was just going to ring my bell one evening when a young man, decidedly half a head taller than I, came up to me, and politely asked me to see him across the way, and to sign my name in the register. Of course I complied. The best of it was that the explanation of his request was the severest indictment against the regulation that could be preferred. It simply amounted to this, that in order to make things straight and seemingly above board, the pupils had recourse to all manner of inventions, gradually building up a regular fabric of falsehoods, which, from the very complexity of its character, had to be sustained with the greatest care for fear of the pupil's expulsion.

So much for the beauties of a system which, as it were, forces French youths to become sneaks, cowards, and liars—three qualities which may either make or mar a man's career, but which, at any rate, will effectually prevent him from ever becoming a gentleman. Please to remember that by "gentleman" I mean not only the man of suave and polished manners, the man like Lord Chesterfield, who, according to Johnson, could kick any one downstairs with more grace than others could invite him up; but the man who will frankly look you in the face, the man who will not wilfully descend to a falsehood, with whom truth in all things becomes not so much a matter of conscience as of habit. The system of the public schools in France is calculated to produce the opposite result. One has but to see the "potache"

in the street to be struck with the difference existing between him and the English or German schoolboy. The Eton boy's hat is a significant symbol to those who look upon headgear as something more than a mere matter of dress. The lad who, when told by his mother that the coat does not make the man, answered, "I know, mamma, it's the hat," unconsciously put the philosophy of the thing in a nutshell. By virtue of that chimney-pot the lad feels himself a man. His turndown collar, his jacket, proclaim him a boy it is true, and he is willing enough to abide by the decision. He is willing enough to run, to play boyish pranks physically, but the brain covered by that cylinder will now and then aspire to anticipate the age of reason, and do things of which he may be very proud in after life. Eton, Harrow, Marlborough and Cheltenham boast but very few laws of discipline out of school hours. Such rules as do exist, though they are not always written ones, are seldom disregarded. Fagging may have its objectionable side, but it is good for all that, and no boy within the memory of man has ever been known to kick against it. Now, let us take the corresponding arrangements of the French public schools, and see how far they affect the boy. His semi-military attire, his kepi, his belt, his stand-up collar, are so many parts of a uniform, and are the outward tokens of the unreasoning and implicit obedience expected of him. Though the boy feels uncomfortable enough in them, especially if he be but six or seven years old, as is often the case, he also feels flattered to be dressed in every

way like his elders; but the elder feels humiliated in being dressed like his juniors. He knows that while he has the uniform on his back he dare not call his soul his own, and, what is more, he knows that everybody besides himself is aware of the fact. His uniform makes him, as far as liberty of action is concerned, the equal of a boy about seven, and, as a matter of course, he feels ashamed. But the authorities who have decreed the uniform, and, what is worse, the uniformity in all things, not he, should be ashamed. By this time the French ought to know what the system of dragooning and submitting the childhood and youth of their country to barrack discipline has led to; yet, in spite of the physical decline of the nation, as shown in the decrease of the population, France will not be warned. Dragooning and barrack discipline may seem harsh words—there are no others to express what I mean. The public colleges in Paris are enormous, uninviting-looking buildings, in which everything, from the front to the dormitories, lacks individuality, where everything reminds one both of the convent and the barrack-room. I repeat, a public school in France is a cross between a barrack and a convent. Its doors are closed, and only opened by order of the director, who is a different being from our English head master. Of course, there are carefully laid out gardens, whose grass plots and flower-beds look almost as pedantic as the head and other masters themselves, although not quite so melancholy, for parterres, designed in even the most obsolete fashion, must show some colour to gladden the eye. One

does not know how far the application of black and white would have gone had the black tulip been discovered. Certain it is, that wherever it is possible to use them, the public schools' system of France does insist on the use of black and white, and most rigorously, in the garments of the teachers. A master would be considered as lessening the dignity of his position if he wandered forth in anything else but black, supplemented by a white cravat. Of late years, especially after the Commune, the principle has been to a certain extent disregarded by masters who came back from England, where they picked up sufficient English to constitute themselves the teachers of the tongue in which Shakespeare wrote; nevertheless, the introduction of coloured neckties and scarves, and of tweed suits, was and is still looked upon unfavourably by the elder authorities.

In addition to the melancholy-looking gardens, there are the courtyards, in which the grass grows generally very luxuriantly, and the playgrounds, which, in comparison with our own, look like cemeteries. Such a picture as that of Mulready's "Football" would be an impossibility in France, unless the painter drew entirely from his imagination; such a book as Mr. Hughes's "Tom Brown's School Days," or Mr. James Brinsley-Richards' "Seven Years at Eton," would, if translated into French, make both masters and parents hold up their hands in holy horror; while it is more than likely that even the French boys would treat their English fellows who risk their shins and care little about the symmetry of

their noses or the natural colour of their faces in pursuit of athletic and muscular pleasure, as barbarians for their pains. In spite of the repeated talk, the many essays that have been written pointing out the pernicious result of the effeminate system prevailing, there is no noticeable improvement. M. Paschal Grousset and others, who have been advocating the introduction of English sports into the French schools, may flatter themselves that they have succeeded to a certain extent, but for all that, the school-rooms and dormitories remain cold, correct, and bare to the verge of poverty. Masters who board scholars, and dames, are unknown, unheard, and undreamt of. The chances are that, were such an arrangement attempted under the conditions in which it exists in England, it would be found to fail most miserably, and would lead to consequences, moral and physical, which one cannot even hint at in these columns. Consequently, enormous dormitories, hollow-sounding passages, perfectly plain refectories and school-rooms—remain the world in which French boys and youths spend six or seven of their best—one cannot say most happy—years of their lives, for even at present it is not a general thing for a French lad to be merely a day scholar, and to remain with his parents till he is between twelve and sixteen. There are few middle-class institutions that admit of such arrangements, and are merely organized for teaching. The manner of living, the doings, are consequently ordered on the same pattern, and there is no exemption from the rule. A Minister of Public

Education boasted once to an English diplomatist that, at the hour he (the minister) was speaking to the ambassador, every pupil of a certain class was repeating the same lesson throughout the whole of France. M. Leygues, who is the Minister of Public Instruction while these lines are being written, might, with equal boastfulness and equal certainty, tell those whom it may interest, that at such and such a minute of the day every boarder in a public school is lifting his spoon and fork to his mouth; that, twenty minutes later, he is wiping his lips; that, in another five minutes, the process of regulation digestion is provided for by the pupils being ordered to the playground, there to disport themselves according to the regulation pattern. In one word, every vestige of individuality on the boy's part is carefully crushed out of him, just as every article of his outfit which differs in the least from the model prescribed is sent back to his parents. The French schoolboy is apparently a more docile animal than the English, although, unlike the latter, he stands in no fear of corporal punishment: the French boy does not split his nether garments with violent exertions; he does not worry his parents with requests for cricketing suits, boating jackets, bats or fives balls,—his tastes do not lie in that direction. He prefers surreptitious cigarettes and yellow-covered novels, the like of which respectable booksellers at Eton, such as Messrs. Ingalton & Drake, or their successors—for I have not set foot in Eton on weekdays for at least fifteen years—would not give house-room to wrap their parcels with. Provided with all that he

strictly requires, the French lad is shown a bed in one of the said dormitories, over which couch is suspended a locker, meant as the receptacle for his belongings. As in the army, he makes one of two dozen occupants; as in the army, the corporal, in the shape of a superintendent, sleeps in one of the corners of the room, and does not lose sight of his charges for one moment during the night, nor until the time when, their ablutions performed, they repair to the refectory, where they breakfast on soup with bread in it, or on bread and jam. Sometimes these are dealt out to them in the dormitories themselves. After that they repair to the schoolroom until midday, which means four hours' study in winter, four hours and a half in summer. French boys rise later than English, most of them are weaklings, and their health has to be considered at this critical age. The second breakfast (luncheon) and dinner are partaken of in common, always in the presence of the superintendent. Fagging, poaching eggs, and making toast for each other, is as far from the French boy's experience as are the doings of the Ojibbeway Indians. The French schoolboy is a machine, almost incapable of striking up a friendship with his fellow-schoolboys. If he did, the intimacy would probably be put an end to for reasons which must remain unexplained in these pages. Much of the physical shortcoming of the French boy is owing to the system of feeding him insufficiently, both as regards quality and quantity. The French do and may rail at our barbarous cuisine; they will have to laugh much

louder than their strength will at present permit, to laugh away the most conclusive proof ever given to them, that roast beef and beer do make sinew and energy, and that *entrées* and *petit bleu* do not. When the railway from Paris to Havre was being laid, about twenty French navvies were among the number engaged by the English contractor, whose name has escaped my memory. They were found incapable of doing the work by reason of their lack of strength. The French manager wanted to dismiss them; the Englishman, with a pardonable pride in the nutritive qualities of English food, proposed to try an experiment. Accordingly, the score of Gallic workmen were fed on beef, mutton, and beer for a fortnight, at the expiration of which they proved able to compete with their foreign comrades. But, however valuable the lesson might have been at the time, it is more than doubtful whether the report of it ever spread beyond a certain circle. At any rate, the authorities presiding over the public school system have never applied it to the scholars. Made dishes, in which the flesh is weak and the sauce strong; an inordinate quantity of bread; too many vegetables; little or no fruit; and a small quantity of wine, now and then, in the form of an extra (*abondance*), form the daily diet of the French schoolboy. Add to this, the almost entire absence of athletic and corporeal exercise, and it is not surprising that a fourth of the scholars are always ailing without being downright ill, and that the doctor who is attached to every college has no easy time of it. And it would be difficult to decide who

look the weaker—those who remain at home coddled up in the infirmary, or those whom one meets in the streets every Thursday afternoon, under the charge of one of the masters, and preceded by one of the liveried porters of the institution. The listless gait, the colourless cheeks, the stunted growth, the seeming indifference to everything around them, is the most formidable indictment against their training. It cannot well be otherwise. During his stay at the college, the French schoolboy never comes into contact with anybody but the masters and the superintendents. One of the latter is scarcely ever absent from his side, in the dormitories, in the lavatories, in the refectories and school-rooms, in the playground, and on the promenade. People would think that some compensation would result from this constant companionship in a kind of friendship springing up between them. Nothing could be more fallacious. The pion—partly usher, partly sheep-dog—is regarded by the whole of the college as their natural enemy. We have but to read the school stories of Charles Monselet, the "Jacques Vingtras" of Jules Vallès, and its sequel, to find out the contempt in which he, the usher, is held. "Boyhood is pitiless," says a French poet, and the pion is the butt of the lads' compassionless character. The pion is indeed the martyr of French middle-class education. He is either a candidate for a professorship who has failed; a poor student who has taken the situation in order to pursue his studies—a kind of French Oliver Goldsmith, before the author of the "Vicar of Wakefield" burst into fame; in one

word, he has been shipwrecked on the ocean of the liberal professions. His status in the college is a thoroughly humiliating and discouraging one. He has a bed in the common dormitory, a seat at the common table, a beggarly pittance, and scarcely a moment to call his own. He is the boy's tutor and his servant in turns. He must see that he is properly washed, and that he does his exercises. He has no right to punish him if he does wrong, he can only report him to the director. And the latter, as well as the masters, never hesitate to vent their displeasure upon him in the presence of the scholars. In fact, to get an inkling of the position of the pion even at the present day in France, we must go back to the days when Dickens wrote his "Nicholas Nickleby." The pion can be dismissed, at a moment's notice, like the merest servant. As a matter of course, his outward appearance is of a piece with his inward man. Poor, very poor, he has scarcely enough to buy the books which are necessary for pursuing his studies; he has no funds for his personal adornment, and boys are too apt to look upon clean linen and broadcloth as the outward sign of inward worth. Every now and then there are scenes which, unless they were vouched for by eye-witnesses would, if published, be treated as very exaggerated fiction. If the pion has not lost all sentiment of personal dignity he will turn now and then upon his persecutors. The chances are ten to one against him in a physical contest; for French schoolboys are far from plucky, but will band in an attack. And when his threadbare clothes have been

torn into shreds, when the carefully brushed but napless hat has been battered into the semblance of a concertina, the director will interfere, and tell him that such scenes are unworthy of the dignity of the school, and that the one who provoked them—the pion naturally—had better vacate the place. Consequently, rather than risk the chance of dismissal, the pion submits to every kind of petty tyranny without succeeding in gaining the boys' sympathy. He may pretend not to notice their surreptitious smoking; he may even provide them with the indispensable tobacco; he may even lend them forbidden books—the French boy will take all those things as being due to fear of him, or rather than as a wish to oblige him.

It is not surprising that, at the end of the scholastic year, the lad returns to his home an altered being and a complete stranger. The barrack system has produced its effect. The individuality of the boy is gone; he has become part and parcel of a barrack population, to the full as coarse in thought, if not in expression, as the soldier's whose life has been forced upon him. After the first year he has little or no feeling left. Intercourse with his older fellows has taught him things of which he had better have remained ignorant. The dragooning to which he has been subject has made him shy with those he loves most; and the few weeks spent in their society are not calculated to soften the rind with which the whole of his being has been hardened. He has become suspicious, careful—according to college lights,—his nature no longer expands. With the self-

control he has acquired, has come egotism; individual fancy and feeling have been extinguished for want of the milk of kindness, until the issues of that milk of kindness have closed themselves, and if the parents should attempt to pour in a new supply it will merely dribble down the boy's sides, as water runs from a duck's back. The French have often been accused of want of feeling in their art, their literature, above all in their poetry. They mostly mistake mawkishness and sentimentality for genuine feeling. It requires no very great philosopher to trace this shortcoming to their public school education. Those who have been brought up at home are different, it is true, for they have reminiscences of their youth to help them on their way. One has but to compare one of the books of the late Ernest Renan, which deals with his childish days, with the "Jacques Vingtras" of the late Jules Vallès, in order to become fully cognisant of this difference. The recollection of bare walls, hollow-sounding passages, tyrannical masters, and contemptible ushers must throw a certain kind of pessimism over a man's after life. He endeavours to forget rather than to recollect.

Some of the most eminent French thinkers, M.M. Renan, Jules Simon, and even Emile de Girardin, have done everything they can to bring about the desired reform. But it has been all in vain. Republican France is much more Conservative in many respects than Conservative England, and we may therefore expect that for many a year the stunted, undersized

schoolboy will be father to the sickly, mentally over-excited, but physically sluggish man. In the next chapter we shall see him as a Benedick against his will, face to face with the quasi-unsophisticated Beatrice.

CHAPTER V.

A chapter on French girls—The *ingénue*—The *demoiselle libre*—Marriage from the divine and the philosopher's point of view; from the French point of view—The *demoiselle libre* and her absolute lack of illusion on the subject—Her attitude towards the *fiancé*—Her appreciation of her father—Her choice between the poor aristocrat and the wealthy *parvenu*—"Arrive un troisième"—The *ingénue*—Her education and training—Forbidden novels—The education of girls—Their amusements—Courtship—M. le Pretendu—A proposed tax on bachelors.

I HAVE said as much as I care to say here about the French youth; let us glance for a moment at the French girl of the same age, with whom, a few years after his leaving school, he will be expected to mate. In this instance the reader may take me as literally as he likes, albeit that the words "expected to mate" by no means convey the pressure brought to bear upon him and her in the majority of cases. Marriage is supposed to be a Divine institution for the propagation of the human race, and few philosophers, even of the most advanced school, Schopenhauer included, have cared to present it in a different light. And yet not a score of French men and women in every thousand, whether they are young or old, regard it in that light, though, probably,

they would not care openly to proclaim their dissent. Their real motive for marrying and giving in marriage is the unwholesome dread of seeing their property fall into the hands of collateral heirs. It is the French who have virtually invented three distinct kinds of unions—"mariage de raison," "mariage de convenance," and "mariage d'amour." Before she is fairly out of her teens, the French girl has been taught the significance of these terms, for that so-called *ingénue* is only apparently a French Miss Podsnap, who in reality has a good deal of the potentiality for mischief of Becky Sharp. She exists still among the middle classes of the capital and the provinces, though she is gradually disappearing from the higher bourgeoisie and aristocracy. The introduction of English manners among the latter classes has converted her to a certain extent into *la demoiselle libre*, who, compared to our well-bred, genuine English girl, is as Mrs. Malaprop to Lady Wortley Montagu. Exaggeration in everything is the besetting sin of la demoiselle libre. The French playwright has taken hold of her, and, notwithstanding the requirements of *l'optique du théâtre*, has only had to portray her faithfully to present her as she really is—a cynic and sceptic in petticoats. Her knowledge of the world—which world lies between the Bois de Boulogne and the Boulevard des Italiens—is pretty perfect, of course, from her point of view. The yellow-covered novel which deals with but one subject has left her without the slightest illusion as to her married future. From the altitude of her dowry she reviews the suitors to her hand, and laughs in her

sleeve or in her sixteen-button gloves at their compliments. "A declaration of love is a piece of flattery of which I take only half to myself. I know that my magnificent little person and my supposed fortune form a nice little aggregate," says the heroine of "Un Beau Mariage." A little farther on she sums up a conjugal bargain, and adds a bit of instruction to her would-be spouse: "The Turks buy their wives, we buy our husbands. So long as mine is not in the way when at home, and does not make himself ridiculous out-of-doors, I relieve him of the remainder of his duties." She could scarcely speak otherwise. Her father and mother contracted a *mariage de convenance.* They probably saw one another half a dozen times before they bound themselves together for life. The asperities of their respective characters came into contact like two blocks of ice, making the edges more jagged instead of rounding them off. Armed neutrality has succeeded to open quarrel. Mutual toleration, dictated at first by inevitable necessity, later on by resignation, and finally by habit has followed. The birth of a little girl opened the floodgates of both their hearts, but not towards each other, only towards the child. The mother, with the domineering instinct which is at the bottom of nearly every French woman's character, took possession of the offspring; the father receded still more into the background. He was simply looked upon as the purveyor of all the good things that fell to the little girl's lot. He was the administrator of the conjugal association in which the mother, by virtue of her dowry, was the

principal partner. The child was the plant and stock-in-trade, upon the improvement of which every cent of available capital had to be expended now and afterwards. "My father and I do and spend what I like," exclaims the young girl in "L'Ami des Femmes."

Her first appearance in society is hailed with a flourish of social trumpets, such as no hero returning from the wars could claim without incurring the reproach of overrating his services to his country. Sir Walter Raleigh laid his velvet mantle across Queen Elizabeth's path. The young Frenchman who is a suitor for the girl's hand is expected to do nearly as much, and he complies with the unwritten, but nevertheless stringent law; "quitte à prendre sa revanche plus tard," unless at the first attempt on his part to take the upper hand his mother-in-law steps in and cows him, which she generally does: for the mother-in-law, whom the insufficiently informed critic is so fond of proclaiming a creature of the French playwright's or novelist's brain, is a very stubborn reality in French life. Madame Varenne, in Ohnet's "Serge Panine," was taken from life. I am not quite prepared to say that, in real life, she would have carried matters to the bitter end she carries them on the stage, but she would undoubtedly have set the law in motion. De la Pommeraies, the French Pritchard, began by poisoning his mother-in-law because she was in his way. Nevertheless, the girl possessed of a handsome dowry, and she it is with whom I am dealing at the present moment, knows that no career but that of marriage is open to her, that her parents and friends

will know no rest until the transaction—for such it is—is fairly or unfairly concluded. If she were dowerless, they would not even pretend to look for a husband for her, for they would know such efforts to be a forlorn hope, and would simply act upon the principle usually adapted in those cases, that of relegating her to conventual life—that is, if she belonged to the higher bourgeoisie or aristocracy. The late General Boulanger, before he took his leap for fame—and missed his footing—was poor, and could only provide a marriage portion for one of his two daughters; the other's withdrawal from the world had been deliberately resolved upon, and the resolve would have been carried but for her father's temporary change of prospects, which made him anxious not to offend the advanced Republicans by such a step. On the other hand, a wealthy spinster, such as Anthony Trollope presented to us in "Dr. Thorne"—I mean Miss Dunstable—is almost a phenomenon in French Society—with a capital S. Hence the girl accepts, not the most lovable, but the most eligible from among her admirers. Money is a great qualification, but a high sounding title is better still. Seeing that her knowledge of the world, before she has set one foot in it, leaves her not the slightest illusion respecting the ante-nuptial escapades of her nominal lord but virtual slave, she prefers, all things being equal, the solid mahogany of nobility, albeit that it is a little worm-eaten, to the more glittering veneer of the *parvenu*. But now and then she takes the bit between her teeth, and marries neither title nor wealth, in which case she repents

almost as hastily as she has married. Thus far the demoiselle libre; the ingénue proper is a different kind of creature. Her knowledge of the world, especially if she has been brought up at home, is absolutely *nil*. As in the case of Miss Podsnap, all objectionable books and equivocal topics of conversation have been absolutely withheld from "the young person." All French literature of the lighter kind being more or less objectionable from a certain point of view, and even the perusal of serious books being calculated to elicit awkward questions, she is, at the age of seventeen, steeped in the densest ignorance with regard to everything except the dry bones of her own country's history; unless, as is not unfrequently the case, she has been able to borrow a novel from her mother's maid, with whom, as a rule, she is on most intimate terms. M. Zola's picture of the relations between Mdlle. Campardon and the servant is by no means exaggerated. But there is another danger that does not exist in an English home. Mrs. Podsnap, though prancing and ambling and omniscient, according to her daughter's estimate, was probably as little versed in psychological and physiological fiction as the latter. Not so the French mother. Should her husband forbid her such literature, he would probably be laughed at and disobeyed for his pains. The following is an eminent physician's story. He had gone to visit one of his female patients, but did not find her at home. Her daughter, a girl of fifteen, was snugly coiled on the sofa, so deeply interested in a book, that she did not even perceive the visitor's presence.

"What are you reading, my dear, that interests you so much?" asked the doctor.

"A book that papa has forbidden mamma to read, and which is going back to the library by-and-by."

That girl was probably brought up in the old-fashioned way. Notwithstanding her age, she had never been in the street by herself; when she went out-of-doors to take a music or other lesson the maid accompanied her. During her "constitutionals" the mother mounted guard on one side, the father, imposing as the beadle of the Madeleine, on the other. The girl's instructions were to look neither to the left nor to the right, to walk straight, to turn her head away or drop her eyelids when a stranger glanced at her; to reply in monosyllables when addressed by her parent's friends. From time to time she enjoyed a morning stroll through the Jardin des Plantes or d'Acclimatation, and a lesson of zoology "with the chill on." The bronze statuary in the former garden was avoided at any cost. Inquiries as to difference of sex of the animals was shirked rather than answered.

Of the systematic suppression and garbling of the most elementary biological and physiological facts, I could tell hundreds of anecdotes which would make even the most straitlaced section of English society stare with incredulous wonderment; for, be it borne in mind, that I am treating of girls of sixteen and seventeen, whose English counterparts move about London and the provincial centres unrestricted and, I may fairly say, unmolested, on their way to high

schools, music lessons, drawing classes, and lectures. One or two of these anecdotes must, however, suffice.

"What is the bull, madame?" asked little Princess Adelaide (the sister of Louis-Philippe), considerably more than a hundred years ago, of Madame de Genlis, her governess.

"The bull is the father of the calf," was the answer.

"What is the cow?"

"The mother of the calf."

"What is the ox, madame?"

"The ox—the ox—is the uncle of the calf."

A century or more has scarcely brought a modification to this system of teaching. A friend of mine, a sculptor of note, had his studio in the garden of one of the large houses near the Boulevard de Clichy. One day, previous to its despatch to one of the provincial museums, he removed a magnificent Hercules to the outside of his workshop. "Oh, la belle statue, maman!" cried the daughter of one of his neighbours to her mother, with whom she was passing,—"oh, la belle statue! Est-ce un homme ou une femme?" "Comment veux-tu que je sache?" was the answer. "Tu vois bien que ce n'est pas habillée."

Carpet dances with friends of her own age, pantomimes, and good classical concerts are almost out of the question. If she is taken to dances at all, it is to children's balls and to Robert Houdin's, or rather M. Dickenson's, in the shape of a theatre. On ordinary days she is sent to bed regularly at half-past nine; now and then, for a treat, at ten. Berlin wool-work in the

drawing-room with her mother when there were no guests has been a great feature in her life. Considerations of providence—with a very small *p*—have probably made her an only child. If she has a little brother he is packed off to college at seven. Such books as she has been given to read are either mawkish or dreary. Adventures and travels are for boys. They discuss questions a little girl should know nothing of; the illustrations of savages must necessarily lack the philosophy of clothes according to mamma's lights. She has, perhaps, a cat or a bird; but a colley dog, or anything as large, to scamper across the Bois de Boulogne with is equally out of the question. If she has a poodle, the animal is almost as elaborately "got up" as herself, and a good run would spoil both their toilettes, apart from the risk of perspiration and catching cold. Of education, in the best acceptation of the term, she has none. She is betrothed at last to a young man, or, more likely, to a middle-aged one upon whom she has never set eyes until he stands confessed as her future husband; and she marries him like her mother married her father. She no more thinks of opposing her parents' wishes than did her mother. Why should she? Ten chances to one she has never spoken to any male being under fifty, except her father, since, in most bourgeois families where there is a marriageable daughter, male cousins, be they the veriest louts, are held at bay, unless they are ostentatiously encouraged in their visits. In the latter case, you may take for granted the financial status of the young man's father; but even then the

young people are never allowed to be alone. There is either a glass door in the apartment where they are seated, or else the ordinary door is left open. An amusing anecdote is told in connection with this system of surveillance. When the father of the present Duc de Broglie was betrothed to Madame de Staël's daughter, they were thus seated one day; those in the adjoining room suddenly heard the *fiancé* declaiming in a loud, excited tone. They made sure it was an impassioned avowal of love, and rushed in—to prevent a more impassioned sequel, one may suppose. They might have saved themselves the trouble. Young Broglie was merely giving his future wife an account of what had happened in the Chamber of Deputies that afternoon.

Is it surprising, then, that the girl should jump at a deliverer from such a state of bondage—that she should be eager to go forth into that world which her fancy paints the brighter for her ignorance of it? If her parents gave her the chance, by admitting some company to their home, she herself would propose, like Mdlle. Hackendorf in "L'Ami des Femmes." As it is, like another heroine already quoted, "she will wed anybody, and at any time, provided it be before Christmas, so that she may spend the winter in Rome." All this reminds one of the remark of old Jeanne d'Albret when at the court of Charles IX.: "Though I pictured myself a very strange Court, it is even stranger than I pictured. It is not the men who ask the women, but the women who ask the men." We might follow the demoiselles

libres and the ingénues into their married life, but the reader himself can, without our aid, guess the sequels to such unions, even if he has never looked into a daily paper dealing with French affairs. But what is the remedy? The late M. Jules Ferry proposed to supply it by high-class education, which, he thought, would remove the predisposing causes of unhappy marriages. Consequently a high school for girls was opened about 1885 (I will not be certain of the date), at the Lycée Fénélon. This was the first attempt in the capital, but a similar attempt had been made a few months previously at Rouen, and we were told at the time what fruit it had borne. Perhaps it is still too early to expect any very satisfactory results. One may, however, doubt whether learning alone will do much for the next generation of French mothers, unless the parents of those future mothers will relax their ridiculous surveillance and abandon their sordid scheming. I question whether a knowledge of Greek roots will affect the problem, or whether ignorance of them would prevent happy marriages or happy spinster lives. To obtain those desirable results, the whole social system of France would have to be changed, the laws relating to parental authority modified, and the inborn greed of all conditions of Frenchmen wholly eradicated; for, as the years go by, Frenchmen of between twenty-five and fifty appear to grow more and more disinclined to marriage, and disinclined to such a degree as to have provoked on the part of some legislators serious attempts at coercive measures.

"Coercive measures" may seem strong words, yet I cannot qualify a "tax on bachelors" by any other term, and such a tax has been proposed twice or three times during the last decade. And mind, it was not an elaborately planned joke of some obscure member, seeking a bubble reputation; it was in each of the three attempts the sober effort of an earnest-minded man. Nor were these attempts prompted by the mere desire to increase the revenues of France, as was asserted at the moment the first bill was laid on the table, just at the time France happened to be engaged in her expedition against China. There is no reason to suppose that the preamble was a mere pretext. This was what it said: "Considering the growing decrease of the population in France, it has become necessary to impose a tax on all single persons over ( ) years." I naturally speculated on the figures to be inserted in that blank space, and also asked myself whether widowers under fifty would come within the provisions of the measure, and at what age bachelors would become exempt from the tax. Whether the tax would be indiscriminately claimed from rich and poor alike—from the Adonis who enjoys his single blessedness, from the Caliban who hates it—was another question that presented itself to my mind. In fact, I speculated for many days upon all kinds of things—in vain, for that bill and the following two were virtually nipped in the bud. I also sounded several dowerless girls among my acquaintance as to the probable results. They fostered no illusions with regard to it, as far as their personal prospects of matrimony

were concerned. They knew full well that they would not be the parties to benefit by it. "After all," said an unmarried man of thirty, "the tax, if tax there be, can only be regulated by one's income, and one's household expenses never are." The argument was not unsound, though it would be folly to pretend that want of means prevents the majority of young men in France from marrying. The causes of this disinclination lie far deeper, and are too difficult to discuss in a book for English readers of all classes. They may, however, be slightly touched upon without offending the proprieties. No Frenchman under twenty-five years can marry without the consent of his parents. This consent will invariably be withheld if the girl whom he proposes to make his wife is portionless. It matters little enough whether the girl be honest, well educated, and generally unobjectionable. The aspirant Benedick may not have a penny wherewith to bless himself. His want of fortune will be an additional reason for his parents' insisting upon a good match.

On the other hand, if the girl be well provided for, her kinsfolk will not only not let her marry unless the man's marriage portion be in proportion to hers, but they will effectually prevent all possibility of her making the acquaintance of one financially "detrimental." One may depend upon one thing in France, which is this: that an invitation to a private ball or dinner-party has been preceded by an inquiry into the financial position of the recipient of such an invitation, an inquiry which for thoroughness will beat anything

and everything that the most experienced detective in London or Paris could accomplish. Under those circumstances would it not be more practical to levy a tax upon the parents possessing marriageable children of both sexes? Even this, however, would not produce the desired effect, because, rather than give their sons and daughters without the requisite dowry, the parents would grumblingly submit to be mulcted.

CHAPTER VI.

A chapter on soldiering—The Frenchman's "love of country," as exemplified by his unreadiness "a soldier for to go"—Parricide to avoid military service—Frenchmen's courage—In abeyance in times of peace—Their manifold objections to soldiering—Some of their arguments—A French village in January and February—The conscript: his mother, his sisters, and his sweetheart—The day of drawing lots—Early mass—The journey to the market town—The Breton, the Southern Frenchman, the Alsacian, and the Parisian—Carlyle at fault in his saying, "Show me how a man sings, and I will tell you how he will fight"—The drawing of lots—The *mise-en-scène* and the *dramatis personæ*—Tricks and subterfuges to escape from military thraldom—Greek meets Greek—All chance of hoodwinking the authorities is gone—Horse soldier, foot soldier, or sailor—A word about sailors—Departure for the regiment.

It is not difficult to make light of the patriotism of a nation other than the one to which one belongs; but, however reluctant to question the Frenchman's love of country, of which he himself is never tired of boasting, one is compelled to admit that, as exemplified by his unreadiness "a soldier for to go," that patriotism seems somewhat lukewarm. Ten years ago, a blacksmith's son was sentenced to penal servitude for life under circumstances which display this repugnance in in a somewhat striking light. In order to obtain the

exemption which is accorded only to the sons of widows, he took an opportunity of murdering his father, and so attained the desired status of an orphan, literally by a short cut. Being a Gascon, however, and consequently superstitious, he went to consult a "wise woman" who was supposed to have the gift of reading the future. She was struck by his agitation, and hazarded a guess: "I see—a dead body," she said; "you have lost a near relative." The murderer, thinking his secret was discovered, seized her by the throat, and made her swear not to divulge it. Justly doubting, however, whether the oath would be kept, he fled across the frontier into Spain. The sorceress, on her part, gave information to the police, and the authorities demanded the extradition of the parricide. He was given up, tried in due form, and sentenced.

This, one may admit, is a somewhat exceptional case. Experience has proved that, in the hour of danger, every Frenchman rushes to arms in defence of the land of his birth, "to guard the soil on which his cradle stood" from the desecrating presence of the hated barbarian; and, in the mind of most Frenchmen, the world contains only barbarians and Frenchmen. But in times of peace, piping or not, the sacrifice of one, three, or—as was the case until recently—of five years of freedom assumes a different aspect. For the life of them, the French peasant and the uneducated working man cannot understand why the country wants still more soldiers, seeing that there are so many already absolutely twirling their fingers for want of fighting. If you tell one of these

cavillers that, in order to have an efficient army ready at a moment's call, every unit of it should go through a period of drill and preparation, his remonstrance will vary according to his degree of natural intelligence or acquired book-learning; that is, if he has any at all. If a mere country bumpkin, he will doggedly ask, "why folks can't leave each other in peace," and it will take all your time and patience to make his stagnant powers of understanding grasp the fact that nations may be swayed by other motives than are individuals. If your interlocutor belongs to the better classes, he will endeavour to refute your arguments as to drill and discipline, by pointing triumphantly to the overwhelming victories of the unkempt, untrained, starved hordes of the First Republic, and will compare their exploits with the battles waged in after-years by the veterans of the two Empires, not forgetting to allude to Leipzig, Waterloo, and Sedan, and dwelling with pride upon the defeats—too few, alas!—inflicted on the Germans by the rough, but ready, volunteers of Faidherbe and Chanzy. In one word, he and his bucolic fellow-countrymen will convincingly show you that the military service is accounted the curse of France, not only by the young men themselves, but by their fathers, mothers, sisters, and sweethearts. If you happen to be an Englishman, he will flatteringly allude to your system of enlistment—the only thing foreign that provokes his admiration.

Such is the normal state of mind with regard to soldiering of every young Frenchman of twenty to

twenty-five for eleven months out of the year; during the twelfth, dating from the middle of January to the middle of February, all the objections to enforced soldiering become intensified, and, indeed, not unfrequently demonstrative. At that time of the year most French villages assume a look of dejection and restlessness; the inhabitants are not "themselves at all." The explanation of this may be found on the door of the *mairie*, where there is an announcement to the effect that, on a certain day, all the young men of the district must present themselves at the neighbouring market town to draw lots for the conscription.

For the time being, the little village is wrapped in gloom. Fathers and mothers sit stonily staring at one another, and refuse to be comforted; young girls look weary, their eyes almost starting from their sockets: and any attempt to cheer them, by telling that there is no prospect of war, that the going out into the world will brighten and polish their offspring and lovers, is absolutely futile. Nine times out of ten one's attempt at consolation is rewarded by a mere disconsolate shake of the head—the women's grief rarely finds vent in words; but every now and again there is a wistful glance at some cheap photograph on the wall—it is the likeness of a son or a brother fallen on the battle-field during the Second Empire.

The object of all this care and solicitude, the conscript himself—the loutish, but withal good-tempered plough-boy—does not take matters quite so tragically. To begin with, he is rarely very loquacious, unless he be a

native of the South or a Parisian—in which latter case of course, he is not a ploughboy; and, whatever may be the real feelings of the ordinary young peasant, he is incapable or unwilling to wear his heart upon his sleeve, especially if he suspect the presence in the village of a comrade who, for reasons which will appear directly, would like to have a peck at that heart, and there generally is such a would-be pecker. More likely than not, it is one of his own chums who has already paid the tribute to his country, and who has an eye to the charms of rosy-cheeked, buxom Jeanne, and who is only waiting for his departure to begin an attack in that quarter. The effect of this jealousy shows itself in too frequent visits to the wine-shop, and a desperate tussle now and then with his suspected rival. Of course the lover might legally marry Jeanne before going, if he could get his parents' permission; but there is not one in a thousand parents who would give it under the circumstances, and without that there can be no marriage in France for one so young. And though not versed in the world's ways, the youth is not quite sure that marriage would be a guarantee of Jeanne's fidelity. So with a heavy heart young Jacques Bonhomme sees the day of the *tirage* approaching.

On that bleak winter's morning the bell that calls to early service is pulled twice as hard by the old sexton, who has probably been a soldier himself, and, in his own way, is quite as much of a wag and a philosopher as the gravedigger in *Hamlet*. Full well he knows that to-day, of all days in the year, he will not ring his

bell in vain—that the church will be crowded. "Funk, sir, mortal funk makes them troop in: they don't care about being blessed, they only want not to be damned; and soldiering is nothing short of damnation to the cowards," said a sexton to me, some years ago, on one of those mornings. Even the priest, though more sympathetic with his parishioners' troubles, cannot refrain from a smile as he counts his flock, and finds scarcely one sheep, black or white, missing. The male portion of his flock looks decidedly uncomfortable: not so the female portion, which smiles through its tears, and has no backslidings in the way of regular attendance to atone for. The way the women lay their posies of chrysanthemums and chinaasters at the feet of the Virgin's statue, the manner in which they carry their tapers to be burned in the lateral chapels before the altars of their tutelary saints, is absolutely a poem to be written in letters of gold, with the text, "By faith shalt thou conquer," incrusted with diamonds. Scepticism may shrug its shoulders, but even the agnostic would find it easier to pray with those women than to jeer at them. The women's sincerity of belief is almost Scotch in its downrightness and fervour. The French peasant's religion is a curious mixture of realism and idealism, which invests things invisible with tangible shapes. Therefore, when the plate is sent round after the sermon—for the priest favours them with one on such occasions — men and women, youths and girls, lavish their gold and silver, though at other times they would grudge coppers. The poor, for whom these

contributions are intended, are farthest from the donors' thoughts. The money is a bribe to the saint whose name they bear. The fact may be ludicrous and ridiculous; but the faith that prompts the deed is worth a hundred philosophies. Nor does it detract from the deed that there is a superstition about coppers, which are supposed to bring bad luck.

Immediately after the service the exodus begins. The roads to the market town are crowded with groups, on foot, on horseback—generally four human legs to an equal number of equine ones,—in carts, in *tapissières*, or *chars-à-bancs*. The roadside is lined with the blind, the halt, and the lame, who come from far and near to reap the harvest which, on those days, never fails, and whose monotonous wailing supplies even a welcome change from the cacophony that makes day hideous—namely, the choruses of the peasants, who sing to keep up their pluck, brag to disguise their fear, freely mutter strings of uncouth exorcisms, gesticulate whilst yelling all the time, or blubber discordantly, according to the race to which they belong. This difference of demeanour is visible throughout the proceedings.

"Show me how a man sings, and I will tell you how he will fight," says Carlyle. I am not acquainted with the precise date of publication of the book on "Heroes," but I feel certain that neither before that time nor after could the great Scotchman have been travelling a French country road on the morning of the drawing of lots for the conscription, else he would not have so rashly offered to prognosticate a man's manner of

attacking his enemy from his manner of "attacking" his notes. For not even the most persistent detractor of the French will deny their courage. The *furia francese* is by no means an idle boast—with the foe facing them, few Frenchmen will turn tail; yet, to judge from the manner in which some of them sing on that ill-fated morning, one would decidedly suspect them of being arrant cowards. Cowards they are decidedly not, but their courage is of a kind that requires a stimulus, and that stimulus is lacking, for there is no actual danger to *la patrie*, only the prospect of a few years of bondage. During the journey to the market town, the young Frenchman, who, until then, has hidden his heart, absolutely wears it upon his sleeve; for the daw he dreads most—that is, his rival—is no longer there. The goal—the market-place—being reached, a temporary devil-may-care spirit takes possession of him, but on the road itself he is either pitiful or ridiculous, according to the race to which he belongs; and, to this seemingly wholesale statement, there was formerly, and there is still to a certain extent, but one exception—namely, the youth from Alsace or Lorraine. The affection displayed by the French for the Alsacians and Lorrainers since the Franco-German war will not stand the test of careful investigation. I have already been severely criticized for a similar statement in a previous book ("My Paris Note-book"); but I know what I am writing about, and all the remarks and objections of theorizing reviewers will not alter my opinions in

that respect. The constant wailing of the French about the two lost provinces is prompted by humiliated military pride, not by affection for the inhabitants of these provinces. When Alsace and Lorraine belonged to the French, the Alsacian especially was the constant butt of their often good-natured, but more often spiteful, jokes. Nevertheless, they never lost sight of, though they did not always admit, the soldierly qualities of the Alsacian. Military service had no terrors for him; and the fact of his being almost sure of drawing one of the big prizes of the profession, according to his grade, ought not to detract from our admiration of his readiness to embark upon a soldier's career. More than any other nation in the world, the French know that it will not do to fathom men's motives too deeply. What if the Alsacian was certain of being drafted into one of the crack regiments, and, when he had served his compulsory time, of being incorporated into the *Guides* or *Gardes?* What if, after leaving the army, he found a nice snug berth at one of the ministries, or as a park-keeper, at his disposal, provided he cared to ask for it? The French took no heed of all this. They knew full well that *les petits cadeaux entretiennent l'amitié.* What if the Alsacian's French was not perfect, and that he pronounced his B's as P's, and his F's as V's? It was, after all, the only offensive thing he had in common with the hereditary foes of France, and it did not prevent his fighting the Germans to the last drop of his blood.

A contrast to the jolly, broad-grinning Alsacian of

old is the rugged Breton, who dislikes the service in time of peace, but fights doggedly enough in the hour of danger. He also sings, but it is an uncouth Gaelic ditty; for five out of every ten do not know a word of French even now. His square jaws, his big clenched fists, his wild locks streaming in the morning breeze or hiding his beardless face, make the song doubly weird. The chances are, even in the latter days of the nineteenth century, that this song is an invocation to his half-pagan saints or half-Christian gods, or else a terrible threat of vengeance on some real or imaginary enemy whom his superstition blames beforehand for all the evil he fancies there is in store for him.

As different as possible from both the former is the fiercely gesticulating, histrionic, mercurial youth from the South, who turns on the wind- or the water-power of his constitution as his mood dictates. He weeps and laughs—and both manifestations are genuine—in the space of two minutes; and you need not be his friend, or even the acquaintance of a day, to be made the recipient of his confidence. The merest casual exchange of civilities between him and you will immediately lead to autobiographical particulars on his part. Like M. Mounet-Sully, of the Comédie-Française, he strikes an impressive attitude, and informs you that, sooner than don the *garance* trousers, he will make an end of himself. Why should he fight when over yonder (with a flourish of his brawny hand) there is an acre or so of vineyard, and a girl he loves? (this time the

tips of his index finger and his thumb travel to his lips to receive the kiss he wafts to the queen of his heart). Is it likely that he would leave the coast clear to his rival in order to find, on his return to the village at his first leave, the rival comfortably married to the girl he loves with all his heart? No, he is not very likely to do that; so if he happen to draw a bad number he will kill his sweetheart first, his rival afterwards, and himself last. Your suggestion that he might begin his killing at the other end is received, at first, with a stare of surprise; then a bright smile lights up his dark eyes. "You are right, monsieur, but I will certainly do something desperate if the chances go against me."

As a matter of course, he does nothing of the kind, and, a month after he has been enrolled in the Zouaves or Chasseurs d'Afrique, when he gets a few days' leave to say good-bye to his relations previously to crossing the Mediterranean, he will set the whole village agog with his stories of military life, and swear that fighting is the only pleasure on earth; for, to do him justice, he is as brave as he is harebrained, and ten to one he will try to induce the girl whom he promised to make his wife to become a *vivandière.*

Thus far the peasant. The townsman, and, above all, the Parisian, takes the matter differently. Not all his affected cynicism or *blague* will hide the latter's horror of a soldier's life. With his cigarette between his lips, his hat or cap cocked on one side, he will chaff and bluster. He crams the wine-shops in the

vicinity of the Palais de l'Industrie, and sneers at everybody indiscriminately, from the heavy, awkward carter who looks serious enough in all conscience, to the well-dressed young *bourgeois* or aristocrat whom he has elbowed on the pavement outside. If aught could reconcile him to the fate in store for him, it would be the fact that, since the new law has come into operation, the richer man will have "to do his three years also," instead of being let off, as formerly, with one year, in virtue of his preliminary test examination and sixty pounds in hard cash. But nothing can reconcile him to the Service; consequently he makes no secret of his intentions "to slope" in the event of drawing a bad number. "I have a trade at my fingers' ends," he says, "and there's bread for me anywhere." He belongs, probably, to a Republican stock, and promotion does not come sufficiently quick, according to his Republican ideas. His intention of deserting is fostered by his mother, if not by his father, though the latter will not scruple to tell him "that such a Republic as they are having at present is not worth fighting for—that the foreign enemy is not half as despicable as the native one. Add to this, that he objects to be sent abroad. A few years ago, *La France*, the Radical journal which was re-established by and belonged to the late Emile de Girardin, contained a leader protesting against "the soldier by compulsion being sent on fool's errands" to distant lands, in order to serve the speculations of stock-jobbers and their ministerial confederates. The same paper advocated the organization of an army of

mercenaries for that purpose. The Parisian shares to a great extent this opinion, and so does the workman of the large centres. Both the provincial and metropolitan workmen are Republicans; but not the Republicans the Government wants. They read *L'Intransigeant, Le Petit Parisien,* and kindred sheets, and talk in a sullen bitter way of Saumur and St. Cyr, and the École Polytechnique, where the aristocrats and bourgeois are being trained to lord it over them. When their blood is roused they will fight, but they will not care a jot whom they fight; a revolution will suit them even better than a war. In the one case they fight against their country's enemies for the advantage of another section of their country's enemies; in the other, they fight against their home enemies for themselves. These are some of the young men who on the *jour du tirage* gather in front of the *mairie* in the provincial towns, or in front of the now doomed gigantic glass and iron structure in the Champs Elysées. In the capital itself they are very seldom accompanied by their womankind. Not so in the country, where the feminine element predominates and provides much of the dramatic and romantic colour of the proceedings.

By the time they arrive there most of the young men are half-muddled, the exceptions being those that are entirely muddled. They no longer want the ministrations of their mothers or sweethearts; in fact, are more inclined to resent them, because they do not wish to be taken for milksops. If Tiberius and Caius Gracchus had been continually plied with brandy, absinthe, and *petit*

bleu by the Roman publicans, it is more than probable that history would have given us a different version of the conduct of their mother; for one cannot well conceive what Cornelia Sempronia could have done, under the circumstances, other than have a good cry to herself, or make a scene and tell her offspring "that they ought to be ashamed of themselves." As for Camilla, whether she be present as a sweetheart or as a sister, she behaves as Mdlle. Rachel—to the great disgust of Alexandre Dumas the elder—believed that the Roman girl would have behaved under trying circumstances: she either faints away, or else sobs "fit to break her heart." She might just as well save herself the pains, as far as the object of her affections is concerned. If not absolutely stupefied with drink, he stands yelling and howling in the mob near the door of the *mairie*, guarded by two or three gendarmes, cold and impassive as statues of Fate, who are waiting for the stroke of the clock to lift the barrier to the municipal council-room, where the drawing of lots will take place.

The *mise-en-scène* of the apartment needs little description. It is bare to the verge of poverty. With the exception of a few chairs and a table at the upper end of the room on a platform, all the furniture has been removed. On the table itself there stands a big cylindrical box, revolving horizontally when set in motion; by its side lies a heap of square bits of paper, with large figures printed in black ink, and that is all. The *dramatis personæ* on the platform usually number five or six—the prefect of the department and his

secretary, a general of division and his aide-de-camp, the mayor of the town, and perhaps a commissary of police. Nor is the monologue allotted to the first-named functionary particularly interesting; for it is the same year after year—it only varies in the statement of the number of men required by the Government, which goes on increasing. Under the last Bourbons it rarely exceeded forty thousand; under Louis Philippe it rose to sixty thousand; under the Empire, to one hundred and fifty thousand; under the Republic, even in times of peace, it exceeds two hundred thousand. The prefect may try to be jocular if he will, the announcement never fails to produce a momentary uproar, short-lived enough, however, and quelled as a rule by the general of division, who gets up and makes a short enthusiastic speech, in which he heaps coals of fire upon the heads of the malcontents by congratulating them upon their patriotic feeling, as shown in their eagerness to serve the country. Meanwhile, the heap of small papers has been carefully rolled up, with the assistance of one or two bumpkins, specially invited by the aide-de-camp. Not only is there no cheating possible, but all the officials are particularly anxious that there should not be even a suspicion of unfair dealing, inasmuch as, with all these precautions, it not unfrequently happens that a charge of foul play is preferred by some drunken ploughboy who has drawn a low number, against some young man of the wealthier classes who is fortunate enough to draw a lucky one. For the latter have made their appearance at last, after

delaying as long as possible the inevitable contact with the mob. They may be of the opinion of that highborn dame of Louis XVI.'s court, "that God thinks twice before damning a man of quality," but they are not quite so certain of the deference due to their order from the poorer classes. The spite or discontent of the latter, indeed, is apt to vent itself there and then, and often in something more than words.

Every preliminary having been duly observed, the first name is called out, and the first embryo warrior steps up to the platform. There is profound silence; you can hear the breath of the poor victim to his country's military glory, as he stands with livid cheeks, strained eyes, and contracted lips, watching the box that whirls round and round until rotation ceases altogether, when, and not before, he is allowed to dip his hand into it. Again all the idiosyncrasies of the various races are reproduced, this time, however, without vocal accompaniment, unless a groan or a grunt may be so called. Out of every hundred villagers, ninety-nine cross themselves previous to dipping their hands into the box, then with trembling fingers and tottering knees they seem to consult the aperture, and draw out the ticket. The prefect takes it from them, and unfolds it —the conscript himself being too dazed to do more than stare about him.

I should be sorry to say that the conscription, or enforced military service, is not a grievous thing. It takes away three of the best years of a man's life. It interrupts, and in many instances destroys, his career.

Nor is it of much use to talk about the compensation offered to the young man by the chances of his rising in the military profession. Under the most advantageous conditions it takes five or six years to obtain a lieutenancy in the French army, for those who have to begin at the beginning. It is true that neither wealth nor title is needed to accomplish this. But, honestly speaking, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the game is not worth the candle.

After the drawing of lots there remained formerly, for the French *conscrit*, and there still remains, though to a greatly modified extent, the supreme chance of escape from military thraldom by alleging a real, a fancied, or a simulated physical infirmity, of which infirmity the *conseil de révision* (the examining council) was and is to judge. In days gone by, these pleas for exemption were numerous, and not unfrequently successful. When it was necessary to bite the top of the cartridge, the loss of two or three front teeth disqualified a young man, and chawbacon in no way scrupled to avail himself of the exemption by heroically knocking out the temporarily inconvenient incisors at the risk of incurring five years of penal servitude if convicted of having done so, besides being disfigured for life. His pride in the perfection of his human face divine was not proof against his inveterate dislike of martial glory. Not being of the sex with whom facial beauty is of supreme consideration, he made light of Voltaire's maxim, that "without good teeth no woman was ever beautiful; that with them no woman was ever ugly."

The introduction of the breechloader and chassepôt has deprived the conscript of that chance. Nor is it of much use to simulate defective sight, as of yore. "You can't distinguish from a distance?" I heard an examining surgeon say, a few years ago. "All the better, my lad; you'll have to get close to the enemy: at any rate, you will simply have to blaze away—you're sure to hit something." Deafness and impediment of speech, even if proved, fare scarcely better at present. "Very hard of hearing?" remarked the same official. "Very well, we'll place you by the side of this youngster here, who stammers, and you'll both thank me for the arrangement. Your conversation will not suffer much." Nearly all examining officers have literally taken their cue from Marshal Vaillant, whose answers under similar circumstances have almost become a text. Only lameness, spinal deformity, chronic diseases of any kind, and varicose veins are recognized as valid reasons for exemption under the new regulations. These unflinching regulations have become absolutely necessary, for, with the system that prevailed heretofore, at least twenty per cent. of the able-bodied young men present at the *mairie* found means to cheat their country. It was no uncommon thing to find a lad at the age of seventeen begin "to don spectacles," as Rabelais has it, though there was nothing the matter with his eyes. An optician, not a stone's throw from the Grand Hotel, made a fortune by training youngsters to sham short-sight. Another man, who has now retired on a competency, openly ascribed the origin of his fortune to

having bought of a beggar the secret of counterfeiting sores and epilepsy, and having started as a professor in that art. These are facts that could be substantiated by unimpeachable evidence. Of other tricks and crimes to avoid military service, I need not speak here, having given a sample at the very outset, in the Gascon who murdered his father to make good his plea for exemption in virtue of being a widow's son. It really reminds one of the very old story of the Irishman who had killed both parents, and who besought the judge for pardon on the ground of his being a poor, lone orphan.

All chances of hoodwinking the authorities having failed, our embryo warrior, who, the reverse of Barkis, is neither ready nor willing, but simply compelled, starts for the head-quarters of the regiment into which he will be drafted according to his size, weight, etc., as set forth in the report of the above-named examining council, whose selection is based on the stature of the recruits. The heavy cavalry takes the tallest and strongest; the lighter weights, but still tall, are drafted into the hussars, or Chasseurs d'Afrique; the slighter and smarter into the Zouaves or Chasseurs (formerly of "Vincennes"); the rest into the line. Of late it has become the practice to draft the lowest numbers into the navy, irrespective of the aptitude for a sailor's life of the individuals themselves. At the hour of writing the custom still prevails, but it will probably be changed in due time. For it is certain that France no longer thinks so lightly of her sailors as she used to do.

She does not spoil them with petting, though they are as brave as any of her land forces. Few students of contemporary events are likely to forget the heroic deeds of the sailors of Admiral La Roncière de Noury. Their storming of La Suifferies at the battle of Le Bourget is a page that stands out bright in the dark history of indecision and mismanagement during the siege of Paris. In the strongholds they manned, and of which they called themselves the crew, the parapets became yard-arms, the battlements port-holes. When they went reconnoitring they said, "We are going ashore." There is a melancholy poetry in the terrible necessity that made them the defenders of the symbolical good ship of the city of Paris. What those men were twenty-four years ago every one knows. If we wish to know what those valiant sea-dogs are in everyday life, we have but to read Admiral La Roncière's book on "The Navy," published in 1881, from which I translate literally: "They start for some distant colony, and there, divided into small detachments, penetrate into the interior, where most often they stay without tidings, without an echo of the fatherland. After a few months France gets news that the detachment has dwindled to half its numbers, from the climate or from disease, or that it has perished in some obscure skirmish. Death marches with rapid strides through their ranks. Humble devotion, abnegation, duty in the highest and strictest sense of the word—everything is there. Never mind; sailors don't count. It is like the ballast of the fatherland thrown into the sea." The fact is, that in France,

if anywhere, is verified the adage, "Out of sight, out of mind."

One day, amongst the official documents of the war in Mexico, the following despatch was published. Admiral La Roncière reproduces it as a reminder of the indifference of France with regard to her sailors. "Let those families who are uneasy take heart. The only unhealthy parts of Mexico are the tropical parts, and they are occupied by the navy." Comment is superfluous. It is but fair to add that since the admiral's book was written a great change has come over the French with regard to their sympathy with the navy; with which, however, I am not concerned at present. I therefore return to the land forces.

In October, then, or in November of the same year in which he has drawn lots, the recruit leaves home to embark upon his military career. From that day forth he forms part and parcel of the army, which, according to some, is the source whence flow the noblest aspirations; is, according to others, a sink, a whited sepulchre, a hotbed of corruption, unfit to describe in words; and in penning the latter words, I am not repeating the opinion of aliens, but of Frenchmen themselves, who, to all intents and purposes, have proved those opinions before the law courts. From personal observation, I am inclined to agree with the censors; and my experience dates not from yesterday, nor from the day before. According to the newly devised scheme, the recruit, especially if he be a Parisian, is sent as far as possible from home. The good, in this instance, suffer for the

bad; for there is not the least doubt that the authorities, who are never tired of extolling the virtues of the people, are afraid of one of these virtues when directed against themselves—namely, the carping, cavilling, refractory, and often turbulent spirit of the lower classes of the metropolis: "l'esprit frondeur du Parisien," as it is euphemistically called. In order to check this spirit, Brittany, Auvergne, or any other dull and wretched country is assigned to the Parisian, and he must be the veriest Mark Tapley, which he generally is not, to bear up against the change from his ordinary surroundings, the only things, probably, which are dear to him. This exile from Paris constitutes one of his most insuperable objections to the military service; but his "patriotism" —still according to the optimistic authorities—gets the better of his objections at last. We will endeavour, in the next chapter, to find out how far that assertion is true.

CHAPTER VII.

The difficulties to be overcome by the reorganized French army—The refractory, so-called republican element—The abolition of the one-year voluntary system—Those who grumble most—The volunteer takes things more cheerfully—What one year's service means to the professional young man at the outset of his career—What three years mean to the working man or farm-labourer—The first day in barracks—The first bugle-call—Coffee in bed—The recruit's new outfit—The first reveillé—The regimental kitchen—The canteen and the *cantinière*—Drill and theory—An American in the Foreign Legion—Comradeship—A glance at the barrack-room—Gravelotte, the dog of the regiment.

"TAPLEYISM," as Dickens conceived and sketched it, is something different from resignation to the inevitable. Resignation is, after all, nothing more than a very negative virtue, submission to circumstances. "Tapleyism," as I take it, rises superior to circumstances in trying to overcome them. In the reorganized French army, the attempts to overcome many difficulties have always been hampered, up to the present time, by the turbulent and refractory so-called Republican element from the capital and larger provincial centres, instigated by professional politicians in the Chamber. I have an idea that the task of removing difficulties will be still farther aggravated by the abolition of the "one year's voluntary system," which, in spite of its unquestionably excellent

results in Germany, was howled down by the champions of "equality at any cost." For though the "volunteer" never pretended to be desperately enamoured of his one year's service, he was, according to the best authorities, a very malleable creature. "The fifteen-hundred francker," as he was called, in allusion to the sum he paid to the Government for the privilege of going through as much drill and theory duty in a twelvemonth as others have to go through in three years, kept his dissatisfaction to himself. The Breton or Auvergnat, from his native wilds and "unspeakable" dirty surroundings, will now and then grumble at the hard but comparatively clean straw pallet, at the coarse but wholesome sheets and blankets. The Parisian will turn up his nose at the black but unsophisticated bread, at the nourishing soup, and the plainly boiled beef,—the whole of which *régime* makes his presence, after a week or so of it, tolerable to sensitive olfactory organs; that is, it purifies him of the smell of the garlic or onions wherewith he has been impregnated from his birth. The workman from Paris and the great centres will dwell with delight upon the garret, as unspeakable as the Breton's lair, which he, the workman, occupied at Belleville, or on the Boulevard de Charonne; he will institute comparisons between it and the whitewashed barrack-room—of course, unfavourably to the latter. The volunteer began almost invariably by cheerfully taking things as they were, and tried to improve them as he went on. Let me admit at once that he had the wherewithal to carry out some of those improvements,

but few of the other conscripts come entirely unprovided with money to their destination. It is not from the possession of a certain sum, great or small, that this difference arises. I unhesitatingly assert, that whatever patriotism there may be left amongst the youth of France belongs to the higher middle-class. The remainder grudge the time they give to the service of their country, notwithstanding the fact that even one twelvemonth's interruption in the career of the professional man, especially at the very outset of that career, may seriously imperil his future success. The workman or artisan, whenever and wherever he leaves the army, is almost sure to find employment ready to his hand, provided he knows his business; the farm labourer or shepherd returns to his village, and occupies his former place: not so the lawyer, the banker's clerk, the engineer or draughtsman, not so the medical student or assistant chemist. Well, it has been my lot to pass a month at an important military centre, at the period of the recruits joining their regiments, and I have found all the discontent and grumbling, all the fractiousness, ill will, and stubbornness on one side, and that side the least favoured with worldly goods. I have seen young men clothed by Dusautoy and Laurent-Richard, and shod by Henry Herth, cheerfully don the ill-cut and coarse blue forage jacket and *garance* trousers, case their feet in rough bluchers, walking in which must have been a martyrdom for the first few days, whilst the others grumbled and swore at garments and shoe-leather which, though far from elegant, were decidedly superior

in texture and cut to anything they had ever worn in their lives. For it is during the first few days of his service that the nature of the young soldier shows itself without disguise. During that time he is neither fish nor flesh—neither a soldier nor a civilian. As a rule, on the day of his arrival he is left to wander about the barracks, or to sit down listlessly on the wooden benches of the barrack-room. The first bugle-call that concerns him is about five the next morning, when his black coffee is served to him—in bed if he likes, for, as it is October or November, and still dark, he has only to get ready by six. Towards four an old soldier has got out of bed, chopped the wood, lighted the stove, pounded the coffee beans, generally with the butt end of his musket, strained the coffee through a towel, and, at the first sound of the bugle, filled a mug for each, and handed it to him. Those who have money buy some milk of the old crone who makes her appearance at that moment in the profoundest of *deshabillé*, a handkerchief round her head, and "ugly enough," as I have heard a volunteer say, "to make one forswear the sex for ever." By-and-by the sucking warrior gets up, and performs his ablutions, drying the superfluous moisture by the now red-hot stove; for, with the exception of the better classes, few come provided with their own towels, and the only one the Government allows has been used as a coffee-strainer. The corporal and sergeant teach the recruit how to make his bed, after which all of them gather round the fire, until the word "Attention" disturbs them from their easy attitudes.

It is the lieutenant, who comes to take them to the clothing store. Then ensues a scene surpassing and defying all description. Silk hats, billycocks, and cloth caps, frock-coats and jackets, trousers of every form and shape, are thrown pellmell into the four corners of the large apartment, whilst the novice dons what is given to him, indiscriminately, almost without regard to his size, stature, or weight. The irony of chances frequently provides a youngster weighing some fifteen stone with a pair of nether garments reaching to his knees, or with a jacket the buttons and buttonholes of which obstinately refuse to meet. But these defects are easily remedied by judicious exchange, though even in the end there is sufficient cloth and to spare in every one's uniform. Especially is this the case in the regiments of the line and infantry, where giants are rare enough. A greater difficulty presents itself in the fitting of the headgear, kepis being modelled upon the supposed shape of the heads of the majority, namely, bullet-shape. Even this too great uniformity is soon modified by some unforeseen providence in the shape of a hatter from Paris or some provincial town, who has just joined the regiment, and when the recruit issues from the clothing store, his own garments slung in a bundle over his shoulder, the transformation is so complete, that I doubt whether, for the moment, his nearest relatives would know him.

Of smartness, as understood by the English soldier, and by him alone, there is absolutely none. Until he attains the grade of a noncommissioned officer, the

French soldier, with rare exceptions, is a scarecrow, nothing more or less. Much of this, of course, is owing to the inferiority of material and careless cut of the uniform; much more is due to the young men themselves. A Frenchman is a very dressy person, but very difficult to dress. Unlike his womankind, there is no worse-dressed creature in the world than the Frenchman in general, unless he be dressed by an English or a fashionable tailor, and "frizzed and pomaded" by his own hair-dresser. This, of course, being impossible, another, and perhaps his greatest trial is in store for him when the regimental barber makes his appearance. "It is like the taking of the veil," say some. "Not at all," interrupt others: "it is the toilette of the condemned." The ceremony of tonsure being over, there remains still much to do during that first day. The recruit has as yet not changed his own shoes. Nor has he his knapsack, his satchel, his sword and gun—all of which have to be fetched from different quarters of the town, together with bluchers provided with the regulation number of hobnails, leather and jean gaiters, coarse linen shirts, large blue bandana handkerchiefs, lighter blue neckerchiefs, "Russian socks"—that is, straps of calico for his feet,—blacking, hair and polishing brushes, bottles of tripoli, button sticks, and cane to beat his clothes with; last of all, his looking-glass, measuring about seven centimetres (three inches) in circumference. But in a comparatively short time those various articles are handed to him and arranged on two shelves over his bed. Then, and only then, is he considered fit to

begin a soldier's life, and the next day it begins in reality.

However susceptible the young Frenchman may be to poetry in general, however convinced of the wisdom of the old precept which enjoins us to go early to bed and early to rise, he has an invincible dislike to follow that precept, whether it be conveyed in verse or prose. If there be one thing which young Gugusse, whether town or country bred, whether born with a golden or with a pewter spoon in his mouth, dislikes more than getting up, it is going to bed. The "needs must," in the guise of his Satanic majesty, or one of his envoys, may drive him from his couch at daybreak, but no power except irresistible fatigue will drive him to it before 1 or 2 a.m. This seemingly wholesale statement holds good for all conditions of young Frenchmen; albeit that the young rustic does retire betimes when in his own village. But what is he to do? His elders have the whiphand of him in the matter of putting out the lights, and the inclemency of the weather prevents him from taking his walks abroad with Jeanne or Madeleine, even if Jeanne or Madeleine were a free agent, which she is not. But he kicks against his hard fate nevertheless. As for the Parisian, he is absolutely incurable in his mania for turning night into day, and there is very little to prevent him. Under those conditions, one may picture the latter's face and imagine his feelings when, on the evening of his arrival in barracks, he hears the signal for "Lights out." But he is even more disgusted next morning, when disturbed in

his slumbers at 6 a.m., by the sound of the reveillé. In the summer it is at 5.30. I made a slight mistake in representing him as disturbed by "the bugle's sound;" for, as a matter of fact, he does not hear that sound at all, and the first playful intimation he receives of his soldier's life having begun in earnest is by finding himself supine on the cold brick floor, his straw mattress on the top of him, and the bedclothes any and everywhere. The skill with which the seemingly difficult feat of overturning the sleeper, and, at the same time, drawing his coverings from him, is performed, requires months of practice; and it is generally the corporal or the senior private upon whom the task devolves. A novice would spoil the effect by allowing the recruit to remain comfortably rolled up in his blankets; the sensation of the sudden contact with the hard, cold, stone floor would be lost upon him, and the operation would have to be repeated next morning, and perhaps the next and the next after that. If accomplished adroitly, the trick generally produces the desired result after the second application. But sleepy or not, the recruit has to get on his legs, neatly fold the treacherous blankets, replace the mattress on the sloping wooden board, dress himself, and be ready by half-past six for two hours' drill in the raw nipping air of a winter's morning; thus honestly earning his pannikin of soup with about half of his daily ration of beef (twelve ounces, English, per diem) in it. These, on his return from drill, are ready for him in the regimental kitchen, whence he has to fetch them. As a rule, during the first few days the

young hopeful of the better classes takes his soup as travelling royalty would often like to take the illuminated and engrossed addresses of provincial mayors, *i.e.* as "swallowed," because there are still left the cold pasties, the wings and legs of fowls with which the fond mother has provided him. Truth to tell, the regimental kitchen, with its greasy flagstones; its black iron boilers, encrusted with thick layers of soot; its warrior amateur cooks in linen overalls that were once white, and large clogs that were once black, but are now hidden beneath several coatings of coagulated bouillon, is not an appetizing sight. Nevertheless, the recruit would lift the lid of his kettle and take a peep at its contents, but for the money rattling in his pocket. But inasmuch as with that money carefully husbanded he can have cleanliness and decent food, a basin of smoking hot soup, a juicy cutlet, and a glass of wine to boot, at the rate of about tenpence, it is not very wonderful that young hopeful staves off the crucial gastronomic experiment until the want of cash compels him to give in. Not that the *cantinière*—a buxom matron if ever there was one—would refuse him credit. She generally knows "who's who;" for, contemporaneously with the arrival of each batch of recruits, she has not only their several family pedigrees, but, above all, their financial status, whether *in posse* or *in esse*, at her fingers' ends. Apart from this faculty of making assurance doubly sure, she is the kindest, most motherly woman on earth. The exceptions to this are rare indeed. Her canteen is by a long way the most enjoyable spot in the barracks,

and, perhaps, outside of them; not excepting even the gaudy but stuffy cafés with which every garrison town and military centre swarms. In the former, the young soldier feels at home; the benches and tables are snowy white, thanks to the cantinière's husband, a soldier, who has the scouring of them every morning. Her saucepans and boilers, her candlesticks and platters, shine like looking-glasses; and when Madam Valéry stands proudly before her fireplace, her arms akimbo, her head erect, recounting her exploits under the walls of Metz, where she was wounded in front of her own *batterie de cuisine*, you feel that you are in presence of a real heroine.

> "Twice *she* fights her battles o'er,
> And thrice *she* slays the slain."

The thrice slain, in this instance, are the poor horses, of which she concocted soups and savoury messes; going about foraging for the smallest scrap of carrot or turnip in order to make the miserable soldier's life a little less hard.

Fain would the youngest recruit listen to her tales for ever; but he must furbish his arms up again, clean his shoes, brighten his buttons, wax his belt, and brush his clothes; for there is the roll-call at eleven, and, from that hour until one, he is taught how to take his rifle to pieces and put it together. At one, there is an hour's lesson in fencing, dancing, or gymnastics. From two till four, drill once more in the open. At four, kit inspection on his bed. At five, soup and the remainder of his beef; or twice a week *rata*, viz. a stew composed

of potatoes and pork or mutton. After that, he is free till tattoo (half-past nine), unless he be on duty. In the course of time he will get his eleven o'clock or midnight leave now and then, if he earn it.

Is the drill excessive? Undoubtedly it is, and the greater part of it unnecessary. It puzzles the stupid, it worries the bright, recruit. Martinetism is the prevailing sin in all armies; it is the curse of all continental ones; and, in the case of the present French army, it might be called a blight. There is an utter want of discrimination about it. To hear a sergeant who left the plough three years before, expound the various theories to a bachelor of arts and letters, who knows twice as much about them as he does, is perfectly ridiculous; still the system is persisted in. To see a corporal teach youngsters who have handled a rifle from their boyhood, either as poachers or sportsmen, how to handle that rifle, is still more ridiculous, and, moreover, an irrecoverable waste of time. Still the thing is done, to the utter disgust of the logical, who cannot help regretting that the French army, in its aim at warlike perfection, should want so many dress rehearsals. Let me give you an idea to what extent this tarring of every one with the same brush is indulged in.

A few years ago, a young backwoodsman, the son of a wealthy American farmer, after making ducks and drakes of his money in Europe, being afraid to go back, took it into his head to enlist in the Foreign Legion. He who could bring down a bird at five hundred yards

was told to go to drill. "What for?" he naturally asked. "To learn how to handle your rifle," was the answer. The young American burst out laughing. "I have never done anything else, sergeant, since I was ten years of age, and I have killed more marauding Indians than there are men in the company." "It doesn't matter, you must be taught to kill your men our way." After which they made him mount guard at the town gates. "Those gates are strong enough to take care of themselves; look at their locks: and besides, they are at least two hundred miles from the frontier," he remarked. But his greatest trial was still to come. Having had a number of cartridges served out to him, he forthwith set out and killed a hare and three partridges in the middle of the month of July. The gendarmes arrested him. "What was I to do with cartridges in times of peace, unless it was to go shooting?" he remonstrated. One day there was a quarrel and a fight in the barrack-room. One of his comrades was getting the worst of it, half a dozen others assailing him at once. The American drew his sword and cut one of the assailant's ears off. Naturally he was sent to prison. "Why then give me a sword, if I am not to use it to defend my friends or myself?" Take from this little story whatever you like; leave the rest. The little you take will be sufficient to prove what I want to prove. There is too much discipline and too little reasoning in the training of soldiers; for, unless a young man be a confirmed idiot, he will master his drill and rifle practice in a very few months, for

hundreds at the end of that time are made lance-corporals. And by that time he may have acquired a liking for a soldier's life, or at any rate have become resigned to his three years' servitude. Assuredly that life is not "all beer and skittles," but with such pocket-money as even the poorest are able to get from home, soldiering can be made very bearable, not to say pleasant. It entirely depends upon how much good-will and amiability the young fellow himself brings to the common fund, how much sympathy and comradeship he will extend to his fellow-soldiers. If he have a moderate amount of all these, he may count on a tenfold return, and such hardships as he must necessarily encounter will be made lighter to him by the co-operation of his twenty-three comrades. It is with all of these that, under the new dispensation, he will have to spend a twelvemonth; it is, with at least a third of them, that he will have to spend two years, or perhaps three. Like the love of which William Blake sings, he will be able to build for himself "a heaven in hell's despair" or "a hell in heaven's despite" in the barrack-room.

The latter is curious enough to merit a few lines of description. Its whitewashed walls, originally bare, are no longer so. There are sketches by amateurs or professionals—sketches that become valuable now and then, the young recruit who drew them having grown famous. One part of the wall is covered by a large map of France, washed in by an officer; the newly settled frontier being marked by a black

line. Whatever the starting-point in the geographical lesson given to the peasant lad, the disused ramrod wherewith the various provinces are pointed out to their several natives is sure to turn every now and then to Alsace and Lorraine; and at that point the lesson is interrupted by a patriotic song of regret that might even make those walls shed tears, especially when the last lines are taken up by the whole roomful, no matter whether they are on their knees washing the brick floor, or perched up near the ceiling to improvise a sort of hanging candelabrum. Close to the walls four and twenty slanting boards, with their mattress, blankets, and pillows; above each bed a double shelf; two large wooden tables, each flanked by a pair of wooden benches; a few pails of water with mugs pendent from them, near the window: and that is all the furniture visible to the cursory observer. There are many things hidden in corners, such as brooms, etc., with which the outsider has no concern. Sporadically noisy in the morning, almost deserted during the day, it is in the evening that the barrack-room assumes its most cheerful aspect. There is almost a profusion of candles, though somewhat wanting in illuminating power, owing to the woeful absence of orthodox candlesticks. The potato, sliced at one end, and scooped out at the other, which it requires a good deal of practice to select and fashion into shape, does well enough under ordinary circumstances. When thickly set in the centre of the board, it answers its purpose, but it proves terribly fallacious when wanted solitarily for

private reading in bed. Under these conditions its proprietor is compelled to prop himself on his elbow and to hold it in the hollow of his hand, in the manner of Orientals holding their footless coffee-cups. Round the red-hot stove a couple or so of old soldiers, quietly smoking their pipes; at one end of the table epistolary correspondence, presided over by couples, one of which is a scribe and the other unversed in letters. Not unfrequently the scene reminds the spectator of "The Blind leading the Blind." The letter generally winds up with a request for a little money—and a reminder to the sweetheart that "three years are soon passed." A little further on, a watchmaker, magnifying glass in orbit, is cleaning the corporal's watch. Seated on one of the beds, a chemist's assistant concocts a draught for the *cantinière*, from a small medicine chest, which may be one of the many things hidden in corners, and remaining unseen by the casual visitor. In the middle of the floor Corporal Ballu is performing tricks with Gravelotte, nobody's and everybody's dog—a dog that was wounded at Gravelotte, whence his name, and suffered captivity in Germany; a dog that came heaven knows whence and was going heaven knows whither; the veriest mongrel when Corporal Ballu found it licking out an overturned camp-kettle, one evening before Metz. The corporal and the drummer boy, who had offered the dinner, came to the conclusion that Gravelotte, the then unnamed one, was neither better nor worse than the other half-dozen starving curs that generally came at meal times. But on the 18th of

August, 1870, there was neither a meal nor time to take it, if there had been one. Whilst the others remained behind, Gravelotte, still unnamed, went into action with the regiment. At first he made the mistake of picking up the red-hot bullets, thinking they were potatoes, but he soon desisted; none the less cheerfully jumping about and gambolling until Corporal Ballu saw him suddenly turn head over heels and heard him yell like mad. Corporal Ballu thought at first that Gravelotte was dead, but he was only wounded. In a few moments he picked himself up, and came back limping. His left fore paw was broken clean in two by a bullet. The corporal bound his only handkerchief round the wounded limb, and put Gravelotte on his knapsack. The whole livelong day Gravelotte remained there; in the evening the lieutenant sent for him, gave him some chicken bones, and christened him Gravelotte. During the siege of Metz, Gravelotte spent the whole of the time with the regiment, gnawing horse-bones which the soldiers had gnawed before him. When Metz capitulated, and all the other dogs remained behind or passed over to the enemy, Gravelotte still stuck to the —th, marching, or trying to march, from Metz to Oberwesel. He never left the side of the regiment, hopping away on his three paws, only stopping behind when one of his two-legged comrades dropped with fatigue on the road. When the Prussians handled their prisoners too roughly, Gravelotte protested silently by licking the hands of the ill-used soldier. But a time came when Gravelotte's

fortitude gave way. After his first forty miles Gravelotte could no further go, strove he never so hard. The regiment was not going to leave him on the road, to perish. Though they could scarcely drag themselves along, they took it in turns to carry him for about a mile. When the regiment reached its halting-place for the night, a sort of kennel was improvised for Gravelotte with six or seven knapsacks, and when the regiment had some straw, Gravelotte had at least two or three armfuls of it. During the eight months of the captivity, Gravelotte accompanied every fatigue party save when a man of the regiment was ill, and then he remained to watch the invalid. When one of the regiment succumbed, Gravelotte followed as chief mourner. Gravelotte is, in fact, one of those old-fashioned "dogs of the regiment" who share its pleasures and griefs. Just now Gravelotte is engaged with Corporal Ballu, but not for long. For in another moment he hears the rattling of the "loto numbers," and he knows that he will be wanted to pick them out one by one from the kepi, and hand them to private Maridaine, who calls them out with amusing comment. So, when the table is cleared, Gravelotte takes his seat in the middle. The game begins: "17, the happy age in all countries;" "21, the little conscript;" "77, pickaxe and shovel, the arms of the sappers and miners;" "31, a day without bread, starvation in Prussia."

"What does that mean?" asks a volunteer.

"It means that in Germany we had only thirty rations

per month, and that when the month had thirty-one days we had to starve on the thirty-first."

After which, Maridaine resumes: "89, our eighty-nine departments." Each time the number comes out, some one is sure to exclaim. "We have only eighty-six now." Whereupon there is a stentorian shout, "*Nous les raurons*, our eighty-nine departments." It isn't grammar, but the sentiment is good.

And so the night wears on; bedtime comes; the last sound that is heard is an amateur violin-player, fiddling the air from *La Dame Blanche*, "Ah quel plaisir d'être soldat!"

On his joining his regiment, the State places to the credit of every soldier a sum of forty francs, out of which he has to pay for his smaller kit, such as brushes, underclothing, and shoe-leather. After that, a penny (ten centimes) a day is added to the account for wear and tear of these articles. Every three months the account is made up, and, at the end of two or three years, those who have more than thirty-five francs to their credit receive the surplus. Hence the young soldier is, as a rule, careful of his belongings, and, in the end, the State is the gainer by the arrangement. His clothes of the "first category," *i.e.* his greatcoat, tunic, forage-jacket, and trousers, are only renewed at stated times, no matter how worn they may be. After eighteen months' service, the trousers become his property, and he beats, folds, and has them turned, and is as careful of his wardrobe as the veriest old maid. If he goes on a six months' leave (I am now speaking of those who have

taken to a soldier's life for good), his new tunic, provided he has one, which is not the case until after three years' service, is either folded on the top of his knapsack, or left behind in barracks, the old one being worn by preference. A sergeant who has promised the lads of his native village to give them a few hours of drill on the village green will don a pair of calico sleeves, like a Manchester factory girl. The soldier's arms belong to the State, but any wilful damage done to them is visited upon the depositary. In fact, whether proprietor or bailee, it is the soldier's interest to be careful. The least stain, a loose button, an ill-adjusted gaiter, are so many free passes to the guardroom. In fact, if soldiering did no other good than the inculcating of cleanliness, which is not inborn with the Frenchman of a certain class, it would compensate for many a sacrifice. For there can be no doubt about the difference between the young man's love of order and of his smartness after he has left the army and the absence of order and smartness before he entered it. The old trooper who, five minutes before presenting arms to his Maker, gave the following order: "You'll crop my poll regulation length, and put me in my coffin in my second-best tunic," is a very fair illustration of what I mean to convey.

In addition to the sum already named, the foot soldier has a halfpenny, the horse soldier a penny, per day to spend (the unification of pay is being proceeded with); but out of this he is obliged to buy blacking, wax for his belt, polishing stuff for his buttons and

other brass ornaments, a little bit of garlic now and then wherewith to rub his trousers, hair oil, soap, etc.

And thus the three years go by, until the young recruit, who has, maybe, become a sergeant or corporal, returns to his home and friends. One morning, generally at the end of the year, one may find him and his fellows drawn up under the windows of the colonel's quarters, smart but sad. They are not unwilling to go, but they would perhaps not be unwilling to stay—that is, those of the lower middle classes; those of the upper middle classes hail their deliverance with silent rapture. They have done their duty, and consider themselves quits with their country. But the French military authorities have not as yet succeeded in making the army attractive to the "higher educated young man," who did not originally begin his military career at St. Cyr or the École Polytechnique. "Art thou taking away that marrow-bone, thy candlestick?" an old trooper will ask. And the answer will be, "Decidedly; and not only the marrow-bone, but my clothes-stick, my button-stick, my blacking-brush, my everything. I'll make a trophy of them at home, to remind me of my three years of service." That is the end, and as it should be. The knapsack that weighed so heavily in the beginning, the straps that made the shoulders smart, have taught him a lesson which may stand him in good stead in his future career; for, except with the very callous, it is not easily forgotten. Those various brushes are not without their eloquence: they have taught him that a man, born in no matter what station of life, is

none the worse for having been compelled to attend to his own wants, at any rate, for some time. The camp-kettle will remind him now and then that the coarsest food will taste like stalled ox after a day of very hard work, and that a day of very hard work, provided one has the health and strength for it, is as amusing as a week of idleness. The improvised candlestick will make him more thankful for his material comforts.

Not all of those who leave the army will talk or think in that way, but a good many will. And, men as they are, a tear will well into their eyes at the sound of the bugle and the drum, the signal for them to leave the bare and unsightly barracks where they were first taught the lesson that, in order to be fit to command, one must learn to obey. Those who have not mastered that lesson in those three years will probably never learn it. In justice to the French, I am glad to say that I have met with very few of these. The sacrifice of three years of their lives leaves bitter memories with few.

CHAPTER VIII.

The political raree-show—He would be a gentleman—Broulard junior at school—Broulard senior—How Broulard junior became an Imperialist—Why Broulard did not become a Royalist—An ambassador of the Republic—The Vicomte de Parabère-Craon—Parabère takes me into his confidence—I write a pamphlet—The result—All's well that ends well—A saviour of the people—M. Théophile Mirandol—His martyrdom and earthly rewards.

ABOUT a twelvemonth ago, I was talking with a friend about a politician who bore an historic name, for he has died since, who had held high office in the State, and who, if the whirligig of politics had brought the Conservatives to power once more, probably would have occupied a still more lofty position. The politician in question was absolutely without an atom of the talent that is supposed to go to the making up of even a moderately capable statesman; he was ignorant of the commonest facts of contemporary European history. On the day of Ledru-Rollin's funeral he happened to be in Paris with another English politician who is exceedingly well informed, though by no means the genius he thinks himself. The latter had an appointment with Gambetta at the Café de la Paix, where I happened to be sitting.

Gambetta kept him waiting. At last he appeared, and —with a hasty, "I am sorry I have kept you waiting. I was obliged to attend Ledru-Rollin's funeral. I'll be with you in a minute"—went inside the café. "Who was Ledru-Rollin?" asked the ignoramus; and the other explained. This same ignoramus got exceedingly well paid for his articles; for he wrote now and then, though the "stuff" was beneath literary criticism, and would not have fetched a penny a line without the signature. This same ignoramus was not even implicitly trusted by the men of his own party; but, in common fairness, one is bound to say that he was a fluent speaker, and that on the strength of that one gift he was constantly in the front. I had been enumerating all these drawbacks to the friend I mentioned just now, and begged him to tell me the hidden cause of the politician's apparent influence. "There is no cause," was the reply; "*he is an effect without a cause.*"

The reverse is the case with regard to at least three-fourths of the French deputies; *they represent causes without an effect.* Their chief aim is not the common weal, but either the restoration of one of the fallen dynasties, or else the maintenance of the present *régime.* Of course, four volumes as large as the present one would not suffice to sketch them all; nor is this necessary to convey an approximate idea of the undercurrents of political life in France at the present day. A few portraits will serve my turn just as well. I am sorry I cannot put the real names to them. If I did, my next stay in Paris would be fraught with

disagreeable consequences. I once was threatened with expulsion at the instance of a tavern-keeper who has a paper of his own, and who did not approve of the articles I wrote in that which I had the honour to represent at the time. He denounced me as a spy in the pay of Bismarck, after having told me that he did not care a jot for Bismarck. "No more do I; but I am under the impression that he is a bigger man physically and mentally than you," I replied. I was warned of my impending fate by a friend who held an influential position at the Prefecture of Police. But holding deputies up to ridicule by name would be considered a much more serious offence on the part of an alien than criticizing the foreign policy of France. I have not been, moreover, in very good odour in France since my last two books; and, what is worse, my friend is no longer at the Prefecture. I feel that I owe this explanation to the reader.

If some one had asked Broulard junior, ten years ago, for the salient political facts that preceded the fall of the Second Empire, he would have been unable to answer, and this notwithstanding his having been educated at "Louis le Grand," and his being then twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old. But young Broulard, whose father had come to Paris twelve or fourteen years before his son's birth, with all his possessions slung on his back, a pair of wooden shoes on his feet, and rings in his ears, did not care for history or learning. Old Broulard had amassed an enormous fortune without the help of either; and his son, during

his schooldays, had never been able to hide altogether his contempt for his schoolfellows—the sons of lawyers, authors, or manufacturers who worked hard. He is an only son and child, and no power in the land could deprive him of, at any rate, the greater part of his parents' wealth; for his mother had been dead for a number of years, and by the terms of her marriage settlement her property could not be alienated, whatever old Broulard might choose to do with his own by disposing of it during his lifetime. But "to cut off one's child with the proverbial shilling" is by no means an easy thing in France, under no matter what circumstances; so there was no necessity for young Broulard to pore over books unless he liked. He did not like to do so. But a boy need not necessarily show the precocious genius of a Pico della Mirandola to insure the respect and affection of his fellows; only he must not sneer deliberately at those who are better endowed mentally and are more assiduous than he. And that was exactly the thing young Broulard did. As a consequence, he failed to make friends. He did not seem to mind it; even at that early age he promised to be something of a snob of the first water, an individual not often met with in France, where the cad, however, is plentiful enough. He did not want the friendship of young men whose future standing in society was to be determined by the exertion of their talents; but at twenty-one he would have given half of his prospective wealth for a title and a footing, no matter how precarious, in the Faubourg St. Germain, or even in the

Faubourg St. Honoré. When I first met him, at the time just stated, he was about the best-dressed young man in Paris, very free with his money, though not spending half of his allowance; amiable in his way, and, but for that fatal hankering to get into the best or second-best set, an unobjectionable companion. He was introduced to me at the editorial offices of a paper long since defunct, the editor of which was a genuine baron, whose uncle had played a most important part on the night of the Coup d'État. Broulard the younger was going to stand for one of the constituencies in the Hautes-Pyrénées. Here is the history of that candidature, as I had it subsequently from my friend the editor, who, to his credit be it said, never minced matters with his familiars.

One day, young Broulard was strolling along the Boulevard Malesherbes, when he noticed, issuing from St. Augustin's, a well-dressed crowd, all in black, and elegant to a degree. Boulard stopped to feast his eyes, and he heard the names of Mouchy, Wagram, Gallifet, etc. On farther inquiry, he learnt that the anniversary service of the death of Napoleon III. was the cause of the fashionable gathering, and there and then it struck Broulard that to belong to so distinguished a set would indeed be delightful. He did not allow his enthusiasm to grow cool, and forthwith added his name to a list a young fellow was drawing up under the portico. It would take too long to follow young Broulard step by step in his ascent to social distinction; it is sufficient to say that, during the fortnight after his

initial move, he had had three tremendous "rows" with his father, who was a freethinker, a freemason and a republican; that he had spent three thousand francs in subscriptions to Bonapartist papers and various associations for the propagation of the Imperialist cause. Old Broulard was simply furious, but his son did not care. He had been at an "at home" of an ex-minister, where he was presented to six former colleagues of his host to twelve ambassadors, forty ex-prefects, one duchess, six marquises, and three Imperial Highnesses. His address to his electors consisted of seven words: "*Mes amis, voici ma politique:* Vive l'Empereur!"—the Emperor, in his mind's eye, being the late Plon-Plon. Still, when there seemed to be the prospect of a fusion between the Legitimists and the Orleanists, Broulard Jeune was suspected of having wavered for an instant in his fealty to the party that had "discovered him." A visit from a duke, or even a countess of the *ancien régime* would have completed the intended conversion; for there is no doubt that, all things considered, Broulard would prefer the society of the Faubourg St. Germain to that of the Faubourg St. Honoré. But no duke came, and Broulard continued to be an ornament to the Imperialist party or faction. An ornament only, for he has never opened his lips in the Chamber, nor is he very assiduous in his attendance; he only comes when there are no "five o'clocks" among the duchesses living in the neighbourhood of St. Philippe du Roule.

The Vicomte de Parabère, when I made his acquaintance, was a few years older than Broulard—that is,

about thirty. He had made a considerable inroad on his once handsome fortune; nevertheless, he had still sufficient left not to lay himself open to the suspicion of being actuated by pecuniary considerations in any step he might choose to take, whether social or political. He was, however, what Carlyle calls "an expensive *Herr*," and contemplated the inevitable prospect of serious retrenchment with something like genuine terror. If I dwell somewhat longer upon Parabère's portrait than upon those of others, it is because, in another decade, the Parabère type will be very conspicuous. We have heard a good deal lately about the Conservatives rallying to the Republic; we shall probably hear a good deal more about it now that the Comte de Paris is gone. It is an ungrateful task to have to teach scepticism "before the fact," but these conversions should, in all cases, be taken with a considerable dose of salt. The story of Parabère's conversion will perhaps explain my meaning more fully.

"My dear boy," he said to me one evening, at the Café de la Paix, "I must request your serious advice. I am going to join the Republic."

"In that case," I replied, "my advice is not at all necessary. Are you going to put up for the Chamber of Deputies?" I asked.

"Yes—no,—I am not certain; and that is why I want your advice. But before I go any farther, let me state my case plainly to you, and perhaps after that you will not look so disgusted as you do now." I did not deny the impeachment, for I felt somewhat disgusted,

and Parabère went on: "I do not owe a single penny in the world. For the last month my lawyers have been paying off debts, large and small, and this morning they told me that henceforth I had twelve thousand francs a year to live upon. For the last ten years I have spent ten times that amount per annum, so you will own that the prospect is not particularly agreeable. I have been cudgelling my brains to see how I could increase my income. Several friends and connections in the Faubourg St. Germain have suggested matrimony, by which, of course, they mean a wealthy marriage. I am neither a cynic nor a sceptic, and, least of all, a hypocrite. I do not wish to make myself out better or worse than I am; but I doubt whether I could make a woman thoroughly happy, and feel confident that the sweet yoke of wedlock would make me thoroughly wretched. I would resign myself to such misery for an important consideration: but, unfortunately, there are about a thousand good-looking fellows quite as 'well-born' as I, who would be similarly self-sacrificing; while there are, all told, perhaps, a score and a half of heiresses whom it would be worth while to marry. If I happened to be among the thirty who will be sufficiently lucky to land a big fish, well and good; but the theory of probabilities, of chances, is dead against me. I could never pull off a big stake against tremendous odds, so the idea of marriage may be dismissed at once. There remain, therefore, four courses open to me—business, stock-exchange operations, the diplomatic and political careers. I will, with your permission,

review the whole four. As an ordinary business man or simple clerk, I am not worth two thousand francs a year, and even at that sum I should fail to secure a berth. At the Bourse I should probably share the fate of all those who are supposed to know a thing or two in virtue of their access to people "politically well informed,"—in other words, lose every penny of what is still left to me. The ordinary diplomatic career—well, if I succeeded in effecting an entrance at the Quai d'Orsay now, I should be an attaché at thirty-six or thirty-seven, and a secretary at fifty, with five thousand francs a year."

"True," I assented; "but if you will go into politics, why not stand as an Imperialist or Monarchist? If the twenty-five francs a day are an object, you may as well earn them under one flag as another, apart from the fact that you'll not offend your relations and friends."

Parabère shook his head with a wistful smile.

"I gave you credit for more smartness than that," he said. "You cannot suppose that the salary of a deputy is the main motive of my forthcoming conversion; though I admit that, to a man condemned to vegetate on twelve thousand francs a year, an addition of nine thousand francs is not to be despised. But I should like to share in the spoils of the party with which I throw in my lot, and, to do this, the party must be victorious. Inasmuch as I cordially agree with what the Duc de Broglie said at the news of the Prince Imperial's death: 'The Republic is lucky all round; the Prince Imperial is dead, and the Comte de Paris

alive, I do not intend to join either the Imperialists or Orleanists. If I were eighteen, instead of being nearly double that age, I might do so. Under the circumstances, this would be sheer folly, for I should be an old man before I could reap my reward, if then. What I wish you to do is to write a pamphlet for me—simply a confession of faith; the rest will follow—take my word for it."

A month later, there appeared a pamphlet of eight pages, entitled, "Quo Fata Vocant," signed, "Raoul, Vicomte de Parabère-Craon." I wrote it without the slightest qualm of conscience; for, let me say, that it is a matter of supreme indifference to me whether France be a Republic, a Monarchy, or an Empire. A thorn will sting, name it whatsoever you will, and France being committed to a colonial policy which she cannot carry out, and dare not abandon, she will be for many years a thorn in the side of England, the only country to which I owe allegiance, in spite of all that has been said to the contrary. My personal affection for the late Emperor is a thing of the past, and can never be anything but a memory, now that his son is also gone. This affection has never made me blind to Louis Napoleon's mistakes, although I am not prepared to subscribe *in toto* to Bismarck's saying—that "too much honour has been paid to his intellect, and not sufficient to his heart." I do not intend, however, to wander into politics. I wrote the pamphlet to oblige a good fellow: I did not expect a penny for it, and was not disappointed in that respect. Without the least attempt

at false modesty, I may say that I considered it a piece of abominable claptrap; but both the Republicans and their opponents took it *au grand sericux*—especially the former, for they gave it unstinted praise, as the following extract, one among many, will show:—

"Under the title, 'Whither the Fates call me,' the Vicomte Parabère-Craon has just published a remarkable brochure, in which he frankly and unreservedly rallies to the Republic, 'which,' he says, 'must eventually prove the salvation of France and of the human race in general.' M. de Parabère, who has severed himself unequivocally from his own caste, will no doubt bring down upon himself the anger of his former friends; but to a man of his intellectual worth this will make little or no difference. Such a man was bound to come to us. He is not the first, but unquestionably the most valuable recruit we have hitherto secured; others of equal, though scarcely of superior, merit will follow suit, and in a little while our adversaries' ranks will be reduced to the lesser lights who are, as a consequence, inveterately hostile."

In justice to the Republicans, be it said that they always measure other people's grain by their own bushel. They do not carry that bushel on their backs, nor display it on their coat-of-arms, but they have it ready for practical use. Unlike the Orleanists, they know that a convert has his price, and that it must be paid, and more generously than if it had been fixed beforehand. They do not make the mistake of the city merchant who was always promising his clerk an increase of

salary, and finally gave him a half-crown a year more. They instinctively guessed that, in Parabère's case, the nine thousand francs per annum of the deputy would be but a shabby reward for the sensational example he had set. As there was, however, no constituency vacant at that moment, they had him elected for one of the *conseils généraux*, which enabled him to publish a second and more glowing Republican confession of faith;* and, six months afterwards, he was appointed minister to one of the Northern powers.

In reality, the Republicans got more than they gave, though their nominee was utterly unversed in the ways of diplomacy. This last sentence may read like a paradox, but it is not one. If space had permitted, I would have written a special chapter on the tenants of the French Foreign Office since the early days of the Second Empire; but, as I am unable to do this, I would ask leave to digress here for a moment.

Save in very exceptional cases, an ambassador need not be a genius. I will go further still, and make bold to say that, even in exceptional cases, a genius is more apt to get his country into a difficulty than a downright ignoramus. His faculty for "tangling" matters is only surpassed by the average diplomatist, who, to use a popular expression, "fancies himself," and "wants to astonish the natives," like the Italian organ-grinder

* The *conseil général* is virtually a provincial parliament, with much greater and more extensive attributes than our own county councils; for instance, in the event of an illegal dissolution of the Chambers, two delegates of each council take their place until another Assembly is elected.

who put a sheet of music on his instrument, and, to the wonderment of the villagers, pretended to grind it off at sight. The ordinary ambassador is, after all, but an organ-grinder; he can only turn the handle which moves the barrel whereon the morceau has been "set" for him by his chief, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. But—and here's the rub—he must be a gentleman, and, above all, a man of the world, used to good society. The *corps diplomatique*, and especially the European *corps diplomatique*, is, after all, only an international coterie of men, who are essentially "good form," who know one another as intimately as the inhabitants of a very small provincial town.

Unfortunately, "good form" is what the big wigs of the Third Republic essentially lack. Of course there are exceptions, but even Thiers was singularly deficient in it at times. Jules Favre did not profess to have it at all. During the preliminary negotiations for the armistice, Bismarck had to check both once or twice. Favre became lachrymose; Thiers made use of expressions which Bismarck resented, and, to avoid their recurrence, he proposed that "the conversation should henceforth be carried on in German." "I am afraid my imperfect knowledge of French is the cause of my misunderstanding your words," he said ironically, but, nevertheless, with true diplomatic tact. When Thiers paid his memorable visit to Lord Granville at the Foreign Office, in the winter of 1870, he (Thiers), after talking uninterruptedly for nearly an hour, went sound asleep while his interlocutor formulated his reply. The

late Jules Grévy has been known to address the Duc d'Aumale as "Monsieur le Duc." Maréchal Mac Mahon and the Duchesse de Magenta suffered martyrdom while they were at the Elysée through the ignorance of the members of their civil household. One could fill a volume with the blunders of M. Mollard, some time "Introducteur des Ambassadeurs," who was happily succeeded by the Comte d'Ormesson. The latter relinquished his functions on accepting a diplomatic mission to M. de Bourqueney, who is also gone. Before now, a French ambassador of the Third Republic has been seen to wear the *grand cordon* and *plaque* bestowed by Francis-Joseph, from "right to left," instead of the other way; another has used the carriages of his predecessor, with the latter's arms on the panels, without saying, "By your leave," or, "With your leave;" a "secrétaire d'ambassade en mission" has asked his neighbour to be kind enough "to present him to these gentlemen," the said gentlemen being none other than the late Duc d'Aosta and the Duc's brother, the then heir to the throne, and the present King of Italy; a fourth, a plenipotentiary *en congé* in Paris, wishing to make himself particularly agreeable to the representative of the country from which he had just returned, sent that representative some orders for the Hippodrome.

I need not multiply instances of that kind. The Republicans know by this time that ambassadors chosen from the "noblesse republicaine," as Madame Floquet has it, cut but a sorry figure in general: they are also aware that the race of "real diplomatists" in the other

camps is dying out; that those who are left are pretentious mediocrities, "fancying themselves" very much, and persistently disregarding instructions from headquarters, even if they can be induced to accept service under Republican Ministers of Foreign Affairs, whom, in their inmost hearts, they regard as mountebanks, and, what is worse from their point of view, mountebanks lacking the showy qualities upon which they might graft their own, as Benedetti grafted his on those of the Duc de Gramont.

Under such circumstances, Parabère was a godsend. He would not want to distinguish himself; all he wanted was a snug berth, pending the discovery of a Sclavonic or other heiress, with whose fortune the ancient splendour of the Parabère-Craons might be revived.

I have endeavoured to sketch Broulard, whom no one, not even Broulard himself, takes *au sericux.* I have tried to do the same with Parabère, who, whatever the Republicans may think of him, rarely fosters illusions with regard to his potentiality for good or evil as a wheel in the political and diplomatic machinery of the Republic. But the influence of my third type is absolutely pernicious in more respects than one. He is very numerously represented in the Chambers, for there are at least a score or more of deputies and senators of the present day whose pseudo-martyrdom for the Republican cause imposes upon the credulous. M. Théophile Mirandol has both shed his blood and suffered imprisonment for that cause—not once, but half a dozen times.

His most inveterate opponents are willing to admit it. M. Théophile Mirandol himself is not quite so generous to either friend or foe. The moderate Republicans inspire him with almost as much contempt as the reactionaries. In the Chamber he is constantly holding up to censure "those who fatten and batten on the blood of others; who are under the impression that humanity can adopt the mode of progress of the serpent, viz. grovelling." One of his stock phrases is that "the Republic, like the meanest of us, must be prepared to shed its blood for the cause of progress"—a sentence which means nothing at all, but which never fails to produce a great effect; for Bishop Jewel's maxim, that "the emptiest jug produces the greatest noise," holds as good to-day as when he wrote it.

Though Paris is the veriest Tom Tiddler's ground to "our own correspondent," the transmission of bare news ought not to occupy much of his time. He should be somewhat of a sociologist, and give his readers an insight into the habits, manners, and morals of the people among which he moves, as did the late Father Prout, Grenville Murray, and Felix Whitehurst. If he neglect to do this, he becomes the showman with the magic-lantern, in which he forgot to put a light, to whom I have already alluded.

So, one day, after M. Théophile Mirandol had been more than usually loquacious in the Chamber, I determined to interview him: and next morning I called upon him at his residence, in the neighbourhood of the Palais-Bourbon; for seven times out of ten the

ultra-Radical deputy lives in the Faubourg St. Germain. The pretext, of course, is the short distance from the Palais-Bourbon: the real reason, the considerable distance that divides the aristocratic quarter from, at any rate, three of the greatest hotbeds of turbulent, restless democracy—Montmartre, Belleville, and the Faubourg St. Antoine. Montparnasse has, to a certain extent, to be reckoned with; but the dwellers in that region are not so troublesome and obtrusive as those of the three others. Even Clemenceau found it impossible to remain very long at Montmartre after he had become famous. The "patriots" were *too* assiduous in their visits.

To return to M. Théophile Mirandol, who, I am bound to say, received me far from cordially when I stated the purport of my call.

"I have an objection to all this vulgar publicity," were his first words. "I would not be beholden to it for my popularity, such as it may be; and, least of all, to articles in an English newspaper. I have lived in England for several years, and I know that the English systematically misjudge and misrepresent, not to say libel, men of Republican convictions."

"That is because they do not know them," I replied at once; "and it is an additional reason for my making my Conservative readers acquainted with a man of your worth. The story of a noble, self-sacrificing life such as yours often does more to remove political prejudice than a dozen volumes of mere theory and dogma."

M. Théophile Mirandol considered for a moment.

"You are right, monsieur," he said at last; "and, though I do not like publicity, yet I will make another sacrifice for the cause."

And throughout the interview, which I have somewhat abridged, he never forgot for one moment that he was "a martyr." He reminded me of "Valentine" in Hervé's *Petit Faust*. "Surtout, messieurs, n'oublions pas que nous sommes à cheval." I report him verbally.

"I saw the light sixty-five years ago,* in a pent-house at Toulon, for my father was a cobbler. I am not ashamed of my humble origin and the lowly circumstances of my birth."

This was said with a kind of deprecating look at the really handsomely furnished room in which we were sitting, and in a kind of apologetic tone to the bronze effigies of the great men around us, after which M. Mirandol went on.

"At fifteen I was ignorant of the very elements of education. I was an apprentice bricklayer, a hodman, and might have gone on mixing mortar all my life but for an altercation with an agent of the law, to use the stereotyped phrase. There was a popular manifestation in our town; they cried, 'Down with the Government!' and without understanding very clearly the import of it, I joined in the cry. In addition to this, I struck the agent of the law. Notwithstanding my youth, I was sentenced to two months' imprisonment. That was my first reward for trying to uphold 'freedom of opinion' and 'the liberty of the subject.' I declined to answer

* The interview took place in 1885.

any of the questions put to me by the judge at the trial, and merely repeated that I belonged to the people, and that the people ought to be the only judges of my conduct. Two friends of the people, who had noticed my attitude in the dock, waited for me at the prison doors on the morning of my discharge. One of these protectors was the owner of a large establishment, in which none but workmen of approved Republican principles were employed. He gave me a chance. I, like all the others, had to work very hard indeed, and the wages were by no means magnificent; on the other hand, we were allowed to have a room in the place, where we met every evening to be initiated thoroughly into democratic and republican doctrines, and to devise means for the material as well as mental and moral improvement of the artisan. It was there that I received my first lessons in reading and writing; but even at twenty I was almost entirely deficient in orthography. Nevertheless, I could read fairly well, and I have never been sufficiently able to thank my instructors for it, inasmuch as this little knowledge enabled me to make my first really serious sacrifice for the good cause. One day, when the people claimed their rights in the only way they can claim them, though *you* would call it the riotous and wrong way, I read aloud a manifesto drawn up by our employer and friend. For this they sentenced me to three years' incarceration. But the governor of the prison was an ardent, though secret, champion of the good cause; he had invincible faith in the near downfall of the tyrant who oppressed France"—I could not

help smiling, when, at a quick calculation, I found that the tyrant alluded to was Louis Philippe—" and the governor treated me very kindly. While in prison, I was spared all degrading, hard, and manual labour, and was employed in the office, where they gave me facilities for improving my mind as if I had been in a college. I had the whole of the prison library at my disposal; some of the journalists—victims, like myself, of the iniquitous gagging of the people's voice, which every succeeding *régime* calls 'press laws'—constituted themselves my teachers; and, when I was free once more, I was enabled, with the help of the printer's reader, to write articles which the papers eagerly inserted. Of course, they were not paid for at the rate of those of more experienced writers; but I was content with little, and signed myself 'Mirandol, Workman.' At the Revolution of 1848 I was severely wounded in the arm, and compelled to remain in bed for three days. I had, furthermore, to wear my arm in a sling for two months. My misfortune went home to the hearts of the electors, who sent me to the Chamber as a representative of the people. But the Republic perished in a little over three years, and I perished with it. I am speaking figuratively," he added quickly, noticing my look of surprise; "for exile, and the lack of material power to stop the tyrant's torturing of one's friends is, to a man like myself, worse than death."

"I understand," I hastened to remark. "Still, there are material wants which cannot be disregarded, however much one may suffer mentally and morally."

"That is true," answered M. Mirandol; "but my wants were and are few. The signs of material comfort you see around you are absolutely of no consequence to me. I could have done without them; but my wife was used to them from her birth."

"I did not know you were married," I observed.

"I am a widower. I married an English woman. When the crash came, in 1851, my friends and I were scattered far and wide. I went to England and tried to live by my pen; but nearly every one of my fellow-exiles in Belgium, in Switzerland, as well as in London, tried to do the same, and living became too precarious. Then I managed to exist by giving lessons in French. My wife was one of my pupils, whom I married in opposition to her father, a wealthy manufacturer in the City, who was known to grind his workmen down to a farthing. He relented when our child was born, and made him his sole heir."

The words "unearned increment" were on the tip of my tongue, but I swallowed them, and merely said, "You came back to France after that, I suppose?"

"Yes, but with flying colours. I was one of the founders of *La Voix du Peuple*. I was justified in adopting that title. I belong to the people, and though possessed of a large fortune, it was not acquired by exploiting the down-trodden French artisan. The paper has been the means of adding to my store; so that the persecution by, and hatred of, the tyrant have incidentally proved beneficial to the patriot. The irony of fate, monsieur—the irony of fate!"

"This is new to me," I said. "I remember *La Voix du Peuple* very well, but was under the impression that it always had a difficulty in making both ends meet."

"You are right with regard to the beginnings of the paper; but after the sentence passed upon it for that sensational article, which you probably also remember—I mean the article headed 'Political Scum'—the paper picked up wonderfully, and, as a matter of course, became a very good property. At my release I sold it, because I know well enough how fickle the people are. Since then I have embarked in several of those combinations which are always more or less profitable: but I no longer risk my own capital; I merely take the editorship. To begin with, I have more money than I need; secondly, it is but right that others should benefit by their devotion to the country, to the cause of progress, which is the only good cause."

"I have to thank you for your courtesy," I said; "but, unless I am mistaken, you had a fourth sentence passed on you. What was the result of that? If you will allow me to recapitulate the landmarks of your career, you will know the meaning of my question. Your first sentence brought you two protectors; your education was due to your second sentence; the wound in your arm virtually carried you to the Chamber; your exile made you a happy husband and father—it, moreover, led to wealth; your third sentence increased that wealth. Was the fourth absolutely barren?"

"I do not know what you mean, monsieur," said Mirandol, drawing himself up to his full height, as he

rose from his chair to intimate that the interview was at an end. "I have been a martyr to my love of liberty; my life, in fact, has been one long martyrdom. My fourth sentence simply imposed another sacrifice on me. I, an old man, and anxious to rest from my labours, have been compelled to yield to the wish of the people once more, and accept the burden of legislation, or rather that of controlling the legislative efforts of those younger than myself, who have never suffered for the good cause. You owe me no thanks. Adieu, monsieur."

CHAPTER IX.

An obscure heroine—How I met with her—How she got her living—I pay her a visit—She refuses assistance, and tells me the story of her life—Three generations of revolutionaries—Her death, burial, and gravestone.

THE portrait of an obscure heroine; one of the victims of the Théophile Mirandols of the past.

It was in the winter of '85–'86 that I met with my "obscure heroine," for I have no hesitation in calling her thus. One afternoon in the middle of November I had a business appointment in the Rue Prony, close to the Parc Monceaux, and, finding that I was somewhat too early, I strolled through the gates into the garden, rather than stay in the wide thoroughfare outside. It was bitterly cold and almost dark. I had scarcely proceeded a couple of hundred yards when a young voice by my side shouted—"Give me a *sou*, mamma!" I am fond of children, and rarely pass one without noticing it; in this instance I was well rewarded for my glance, for the lad who had made the modest request was sweet to look upon as he stood there, swinging his pretty astrachan cap by its tassel, baring his fair young forehead to the cutting wind, and gazing earnestly into his mother's face.

"A sou! what do you want with a sou?" asked the latter.

"To buy *plaisirs* of Madame Barbette. Félicie always gives me a sou when we come to the park."

"But you have more sweets at home than you can eat, and they much more wholesome."

"Never mind, mamma; I'd sooner have the plaisirs. Just let me take you; it's such fun. You turn, and then you have a number, and then you have as many plaisirs as the number. If there's three, you get three: but the biggest number is twelve; but I never had as many. Come along, mamma, there's a dear."

"Very well," said the lady; "let's go and see Madame Barbette."

I suppose the boy's enthusiasm had communicated itself to me, and roused the gambling spirit which lies barely skin-deep in my constitution; for I followed him and his mother without exactly knowing why, unless it was from the sheer want of something better to do. The urchin scarcely waited for his mother's consent, but, bounding in front of her like a young colt, reached the spot at least half a minute before us.

Just by the gilded gates that open on the Boulevard de Courcelles, but outside them, sat an old woman on a low stool. By her side stood a tall cylindrical tin box, containing the coveted wafers, with a dial painted on its lid. The lady had quickened her step; but I, afraid of being considered indiscreet, remained within the gates and watched the scene from a short distance.

While the lad, who had set the needle spinning,

followed its revolutions with intense excitement, his mother turned mechanically towards the old woman, and I did the same. A long, thin face, frightfully emaciated; its yellow skin, rutted rather than wrinkled, made more yellow still by the snowy cap in which the features were, as it were, framed; a pair of sorrowful, dreamy dark eyes, rendered dim with age, though more probably with tears; bony hands that trembled as they took the small bronze coin from the rosy, chubby palm of the little gambler; the body, almost bent in twain, even while seated, and shivering beneath a wretched black shawl at every gust of wind;—such was the figure presented to our view. The lady involuntarily drew her costly fur cloak tightly around her, and was about to speak to the cake-seller, when a joyous shout from her son prevented her.

"Ten, mamma, I have ten! I have never won so many before." And, evidently proud of his victory, he kept repeating the words again and again. Not a smile from the old woman. With her colourless, fleshless hands she lifted the lid of her box, and slowly took from it a small pile of cornucopia-shaped wafers, arranged within each other, and handed them to the urchin, who, with more shouts of delight, began to devour them on the spot, his mother watching him with a delight scarcely less intense than his own. She seemed to have forgotten all about the poor, shivering creature by her side; but it was for a moment only—the next, she quietly took out her purse, placed a five-franc piece on the counter, and stepped back as if to go. At the sight, however, of the big

silver coin, the old woman lifted her hand, and, without saying a word, pointed to it with her long, bony finger. The sign was evidently understood, for the would-be benefactress immediately took up the money, saying, in a sorrowful tone, "Pray, pardon me," and strolled away, preceded by her son, still munching his wafers.

The old woman fell back into her dreamy attitude, shivering more perceptibly now and then, as a gust of wind swept along the broad, white boulevard, raising a blinding dust, and soughing a mournful dirge through the leafless branches of the trees in the Parc Monceaux.

I watched the lady and her son till both were quite out of sight, and, after waiting for more than ten minutes, plucked up courage and went in search of the old sweet-seller. I had waited too long. By that time it was quite dark, and when I reached the park gates I saw her rise slowly from her seat, take up her long, tin box with one hand, her low stool with the other, and disappear into the porter's lodge. A moment or so afterwards she reappeared without either. I saw her cross the wide open space with trembling and unsteady gait. I knew that it was not the favourable moment for accosting her, and, while standing irresolute what to do, the gate-keeper came to his threshold. He made no difficulty to give me the old woman's address. "Madame Barbette's address, monsieur? It is Rue de Lévis, 48." I made up my mind to let Madame Barbette get settled for the evening before intruding upon her, and went to keep my appointment.

An hour later I mounted the seemingly endless

greasy staircase of the house in the Rue de Lévis, which probably contained not less than a hundred lodgers, whose ceaseless tramping up and down had worn away the steps. Madame Barbette lived on the sixth floor, at the end of a long and narrow corridor, which I managed to reach after a good deal of groping in the dark, for there was neither gas nor candle to guide me. Luckily, the moon, shining through a small skylight, proved my friend. In answer to my knock, the old woman herself opened the door. A wretched room, if even there was one; in fact, nothing more than an attic, getting its daylight from a window in the sloping roof, and its walls, once whitewashed, showing the periodical incursions of the rain in the long, rusty, serpentine stripes. Two rush-bottomed chairs, a small table, a few earthen pots and pans, and in a corner on the red-brick floor a clean, narrow mattress, covered by what we call a pauper's blanket, made up the furniture. A tiny, glowing heap of charcoal in the fireplace; Madame Barbette herself standing on the threshold, holding a square charred cube of wood, doing duty as a candlestick. A scene worthy of a Gerard Douw, but a blot upon our contemporary civilization.

"Madame Barbette," I said.

"That's my name, monsieur; please to come in," she answered, closing the door behind me, and, with a bow that would have done credit to a duchess, pointing to one of the two chairs, whilst she seated herself opposite to me, near the fireplace. Then, without another word, she waited for me to explain my business.

I own I felt somewhat embarrassed. There was but one way out of the difficulty—to tell a downright falsehood. I took that one way. "I am commissioned by a wealthy lady, who saw you to-day in the Parc Monceaux, and who feels a great interest in you——" I began.

She left me no time to finish my sentence, although she did not positively interrupt me. "There are not many persons who take a great interest in me," she said in a low voice, speaking to herself rather than to me.

But I pretended to pay no heed, and went on: "And who wishes to be useful to you. She's under the impression that you are not very well to do."

"That's true; I am very poor."

"She would like to help you."

"I do not ask for charity."

I kept silent for a moment. There was nothing defiant in the tone of the latter words. They were meant as a mere statement, not as a boast.

"You may rest assured," I remarked timidly, and almost at random, "that there is no wish to hurt your feelings; but you cannot object to the offer of some fuel and warm clothing for the winter."

"My son had no wood, no warm clothing for the winter," said Madame Barbette, musingly.

"You have a son?"

"I had a son and a grandson. The little one, who was four years old, died during the siege. He was ill, and the doctor said he wanted milk. But there was no milk for us."

"And your son?"

"My son died far, far away from here, over the sea, in the accursed spot you call New Caledonia." And her voice, so soft and sweet but a moment before, almost rose to a shriek.

"Has he been dead long?"

"He died a few months before the amnesty. The Versaillais took him on the 3rd of June, 1871. I saw him once in prison."

The voice had fallen again; I could scarcely catch the words. Few as they were, they were broken by sobs. I was at a loss what to say, and naturally fell into the commonplace of attempted consolation—"Let us hope for better days." My attempt produced an unexpected effect.

"Better days," repeated Madame Barbette, looking me full in the face; "better days for the like of us! Better days! Not here, at any rate——"

"If not here, elsewhere, perhaps."

I felt sorry I had spoken. The old woman literally jumped from her seat, and stood upright before me.

"That's the religion the rich preach to keep the poor quiet," she said vehemently. "I want none of that religion. It was a priest who denounced my son."

"It was his duty, perhaps," I stammered.

"Can it be the duty of any one to drag the child away from its mother? Oh, I know what you are going to say, monsieur—my son was a criminal, he had taken up arms against the Assembly at Versailles; but listen to me, monsieur,"—and her voice became

solemn as she grasped the back of her chair to steady herself,—"listen to me, monsieur. I do not know who and what you are; but your accent tells me you are not French. My want of education prevents my knowing to what nation you belong. If, as I suspect, you are English, may you be rewarded for the good you have done us in our hour of need; beyond that I have no wish to know. I am the daughter, the wife, the mother of artisans; but I have reflected a good deal during my life, especially since my son was taken from me. I have, perhaps, but a few days to live; but listen to me. Your class has much to learn from mine. My father took part in the Great Revolution, and when he spoke of it, it was in words of burning fire; his face lighted up; he became a different man. I could not repeat to you all he said, but his tales stirred me to the heart, and I felt that in those days much had been accomplished for us poor people, who heretofore had been despised and downtrodden. My father was a sober, honest workman, toiling early and late, spending none of his time in the wineshop, and, above all, never telling a lie. When he spoke, he merely told what he had seen."

Exhausted as she seemed to be, the old woman left me no time to edge in a word. She resumed almost immediately.

"There was still much to do after the Revolution. Much of what the Republicans had fought for was lost again. Work as they might, they could not make both ends meet. My father and his friends often said

to each other, 'If we had but the Republic over again!' But there were not many who thought so. At the time I speak of—more than sixty years ago—the workmen spoke of 'the Other One,' of him who died at St. Helena. In 1830—I had been married about two years, my child was still at the breast—I was taken with fear and trembling when I heard the women in the street pronounce the word 'barricade.' We lived in the Faubourg du Temple with my father; he and my husband worked in the same shop. One evening they came home earlier than usual, and asked for their dinner. I shall never forget that night. Whilst I bestirred myself to get the meal ready as quickly as possible, I watched them both, but they did not speak. My husband turned his head away when I looked at him. I dared not ask any questions. The dinner was eaten in silence. When it was over, my father got up first. 'Be of good cheer, my girl,' he said; 'we are going to fight; it is for the Republic.' I could not utter a word, my tears were almost choking me; but my husband took me in his arms, and held me for some time against his breast. Just then my little boy began to cry. My father ran towards his cradle, lifted him out of it, kissed him on both cheeks, and passed him on to my husband, who gave him back to me, after having pressed the little fellow's face close to his for two or three minutes. I saw that he had been crying, but I pretended to be busy with my babe, because I did not wish to make a coward of him. Neither of us had spoken a word. My father was again the first to break

the silence. 'Let us go,' he said, and the door closed upon them both. I did not go to bed that night, and though I could not help crying, I felt that their duty as men compelled them to do what they were doing. In the morning my husband returned alone. Behind him came two men with a stretcher, on which lay the corpse of my father. He had been killed on one of the barricades of the Rue St. Denis."

The old woman kept silent for a few moments, apparently absorbed in her mournful recollections—a silence which I dared not break. Then she went on—

"That was the first loss I sustained for the 'sacred cause.'" Even at that moment, and solemn as was her voice, I could not help remembering that she and M. Théophile Mirandol made use of the same expression, but I did not attempt to interrupt her. "I had heard my father and husband call it that," she explained. "Alas, that loss was not to be the last. After 1830, things did not mend for us poor people. The Republic seemed as far off as ever, though the working men had been fighting under the express promise of it. For the first few days they were kept quiet with fair words; after that no one cared or thought about them. They were the people of your rank who profited by this second revolution, or rather *les bourgeois*, for you do not give me the impression, monsieur, of being a prosperous, fat smug-and-snug tradesman. In fact, I feel almost certain you are not; for no *bourgeois*, whether French or foreign, would, as far as I can see, trouble about a poor old woman on

the brink of the grave. My husband and I lived as best we could, bringing up our child in spite of the hard times, of the many weeks when work failed altogether. 'No work!'—you do not know what that means to us. A pair of strong arms and a stout heart seeking to do something and not finding it—you cannot imagine what a sad idea it gives you of this world, where some have nothing at all and others everything. Eighteen years went by—for I managed to keep my husband out of all the troubles during the reign of Louis Philippe—eighteen years went by like this, and, at the beginning of '48, there seemed to be a ray of light: my husband and his friends began to hold up their heads; the Republic was proclaimed once more. But their joy was shortlived; after having shouldered the musket in February, they had to take it up again in June. My husband came home unhurt the first and the second time. But after the June days, when the insurgents had been beaten, they called them criminals, as you would have called my son just now if I had not taken the words out of your mouth. A criminal—my husband! He, the best of husbands, the tenderest of fathers, he who was devotion itself! Was he a murderer, a thief, or a forger? To risk your life for what you believe to be right—to risk leaving behind you a beloved wife and child struggling with starvation for no other motive than to bring about the triumph of the principles which you know to be just—can that be called criminal? Ah, I am but an ignorant woman, but, from that day forward, I have fully understood what that word means

on the lips of those who are so lavish with it. They use it to excuse the butcheries they commit after the victory. I, monsieur, who am speaking to you, I have seen some of these butcheries at the Cloître St. Benoit, where they shot the men by twenties at a time—men who had been taken prisoners and were utterly defenceless. You shake your head, monsieur; you do not believe it. I know that, later on, these things are denied; it is even forbidden to speak of them. But we, the proletarians—I think that's what you call us—we remember them. My husband escaped those wholesale raids that followed the June days. For two months I hid them from their pursuers, him and my son, though the latter had not lifted a finger. He was but little over eighteen, and his father had told him to stay with me. It went sorely against the grain with the brave boy, but he had been trained to obey his father's wishes. Well, I hid them both lest the child should suffer for the parent; they were not scrupulous about that sort of thing in those days. 'A bit of scum less or a bit of scum more made no difference to them.' Two years after that our son drew a low number. He went to Algeria, where he remained for about three years. That was fortunate, for, had he been in Paris in 1851, they would have compelled him perhaps to shoot down his own father. It was on the 3rd of December of that year that my husband was killed in the Rue d'Aumaire. We were living hard by, in the Rue Volta. The night before, some friends came. They spoke of the proclamations of the 'Traitor' that covered

every wall; but nothing had been decided, as they always mistrusted the working man's bugbear—the *bourgeois*. Early next morning we heard some shots. My husband dressed, and went down. In another moment I was at his heels. At the corner of the Rue d'Aumaire, in a wineshop, there were several women whose husbands were already in the thick of the fight. We watched through the windows, and during the lulls we rushed out to pick up the killed and wounded. I had already picked up three, the fourth was he who had shared my life, my every thought for twenty-four years; who had never said a harsh word to me, who had never given me a moment's pain. He was dead. Whilst I was lifting him from the ground, whiter than the blouse he wore, whilst kneeling at his side I kissed him, trying to call him back to life, a bullet struck me down also."

And the old woman, with a lofty disregard of sex, tore open her dress, and showed me, just above the shrunken bosom, a scar in which one could have placed one's finger.

"I fell by the side of my husband," she went on, almost mechanically, "and became unconscious of what happened. When I came to my senses many days afterwards, I was told that I was a widow, that I had given one more pledge to our cause. I had nothing left on earth but my son, who came back very soon afterwards. He made up for the father he, and the husband I, had lost. We lived together, reconciled to our lot by the memory of the dear ones who 'fell fighting.' The Republic was again at an end. We

had ups and downs like all poor people, but my son's only thought was for me. He provided me with every comfort he could afford. There never was a better son."

The voice of the old woman had gradually sunk to the soft and sweet pitch in which she began, and now it finally died away. She seemed to have become altogether oblivious of me and my errand. Her thoughts were busy with the past. They were dwelling on vanished scenes of peace and domestic content. As in the battle-songs of old, the bard was dwelling on the happy home.

"I have almost finished," she said at last, turning towards me, after several minutes of absolute silence which I cared not to break,—"I have almost finished. Years went by, during which there was little change for us, unless it were a change for the worse. There was little change, for my son married late in life. His wife died in giving birth to the little being who wasted away during the siege for want of milk. 'The decrees of Providence are inscrutable,' the priests say—an easy way to get out of the difficulty of explaining why he went and I remained. My son was fighting on the fortifications against the Prussians. One evening he came home, saying, 'Mother, it seems that the Government wants to capitulate; but we who are fighting should also be consulted, and I know what the result would be. We are against surrender.' He was excited, and I fancied I heard my father, the man of the First Revolution, as he spoke those words. For weeks and weeks my son came home every now and then,

but only for a few moments to bring me his pay, which had become our sole means of support. You, monsieur, know what followed. When everything was finished, he burst in upon me,—gaunt, in rags, almost a spectre. For four days he lay in hiding. The fifth they came to arrest him. Such has been our life, monsieur, and"—here her voice rose again—"do you understand now why I'll have none of your charity? However badly off I may be, I am better off than he was yonder. What are my privations compared with his? Could I nurse or coddle myself, knowing what he must have suffered, body and soul, in that hell upon earth, before death came as a happy release? If what you hint be true, that there is a hereafter—and I trust that it may be so—I should be afraid to meet him when the time comes. And the sooner the better."

Here the old woman stopped suddenly.

"But, madame," said I, scarcely knowing what to say, "why did you not petition? Your son might have got his pardon."

"His pardon!" the old woman shrieked, drawing herself up to her full height till she looked as we fancy a prophetess of old may have looked—"his pardon! Would you have had my son disgrace himself, and be pointed at by friends for ever afterwards? Enough, monsieur; you and I are not likely to understand each other. I wish you good evening." With this she strode to the door, opened it, and stood erect as I was passing its threshold.

* * * * *

The next day but one, urgent business took me to London. On the journey I made the acquaintance of a Frenchman who was paying his first visit to our metropolis. Some slight services which I was enabled to render him caused our acquaintance to ripen into friendship, and, shortly after my return to Paris, I received an invitation to dine with him and his wife *quite without ceremony*, as he kindly underlined the words. To my great surprise, on entering the drawing-room, I recognized my hostess as the lady whom I had seen in the Parc Monceaux on that November afternoon. A little over four weeks had passed since then. My first impulse was to remind her of the incident, but, dinner being announced at that moment, I had not the opportunity. Just before the sweets were placed on the table, in bounded the little lad, the little gambler to whom I owe this sketch. Whilst his mother was helping him from a *crème* with wafers, whose appearance no doubt reminded him of his favourite *plaisirs*, he exclaimed, "Mamma, poor Madame Barbette comes no longer to the park. I heard the keeper tell Félicie that she had been found dead in her room. The doctor said she had died of hunger. Dying of hunger is when people haven't enough to eat; is it not, mamma?"

I could see a slight shudder on the part of my hostess; but neither she nor her husband answered their son, who, with the fickleness of childhood, passed to another subject.

* * * * *

We were only just in time to save the body from

a pauper's grave. In ordinary cases we should have been too late, but there was a *post mortem* examination. And now Madame Barbette lies buried in the St. Ouen cemetery, where a simple stone marks her last earthly resting place. Its inscription is composed of but four words, but no truer were ever cut by a stonemason. "Ci-gît une héroïne"—"Here lies a heroine."

CHAPTER X.

THE STORY OF AN ELECTORAL CANVASS.

THE most intimate friend I have among the French is constitutionally unable to grasp the fact that one man is as good as another; and this mental obtuseness led to a very characteristic scene a few years ago, when France was holding her general elections. He wished to record his vote in the principal town of the *arrondissement*, which is about ten miles distant from his residence; and on the eve of polling day, just before dinner, he gave orders to his groom to bring the trap round at ten the next morning.

"Very well, monsieur," said the man, most respectfully; "and would monsieur allow me to go with him?"

"Why do you wish to go with me, Pierre?" asked my friend.

"Well, monsieur," came the answer, "I wish to go to the poll too."

"Oh, that's it?" was the master's remark. "Then I'll tell you what we'll do: we'll both stop at home; in that way there'll be no mischief done on either side." And there the matter ended.

That is the light in which universal suffrage is regarded by a great many educated Frenchmen: they no longer attempt to fight against the overwhelming tide of democracy it has brought in its wake; they merely try to compound with it in the mildest manner; hence the excitement which, even as late as a decade ago, made itself felt at the approaching elections has absolutely dwindled to nothing. Even before his death, the Comte de Paris as a dynastic leader had been weighed in the balance and found wanting; Prince Victor is not even put into the scales. There is still the official candidate of the Government—though he is not designated by that title,—and there is the official candidate of the Opposition; but, honest as both may be, and sometimes are, they know as well as I do: the first, that his election—even in numbers—will not bring about the honest and perhaps somewhat ideal Republic he may have dreamt of; the second, that France cannot swerve by as much as a hair's breadth from the so-called Republican course which her foreign rather than her home policy has forced upon her. In order to make this plain to the reader, I propose to sketch one of those typical candidates, such as I knew him not later than a few years ago—such as I know him to-day; after that, the reader may judge for himself of election tactics in France, and determine whether such tactics are likely to bring about constitutionally the millennium which each candidate adopts as his battle-cry.

I doubt whether there be a more charitable, upright, good-natured creature on the face of the earth than was

M. Guillaume Francion five years and a half ago. Though he never disguised his sympathies with the moderate and Conservative Republic, even the most blatant Radicals and arrant reactionaries had a good word to say for him, for they felt sure, and proclaimed the knowledge loudly, that his political opinions would never cause him to commit a mean or questionable act. How long such a man would be allowed to live in peace in England I am unable, perhaps unwilling, to say; in France he is sure to be pounced upon by the Prefect of the Department, whose chief functions, after many years of personal experience, I really cannot better define than those of a parliamentary impresario — or, to speak by the card, of a jackal to the parliamentary impresarios of the capital. It would take too much space here to sketch the various types I have known, from the late M. de Maupas of Coup d'État fame—to M. Bourgeois, the recent Minister of Justice during the Panama imbroglio. Suffice it in this instance to say that the Prefect of the Department in which M. Francion lived singled him out for parliamentary honours, and intimated as much to headquarters. "M. Francion," he wrote, "will be of greater service to us than we can be to him." The flattering sentence was absolutely true, though it is a moot point whether it was prompted by pure admiration on the Prefect's part. An unsuccessful election is a terrible thing to a Prefect; it frequently means dismissal—the word is harsh, but appropriate—relapse into former obscurity, and, what is worse, impecunious obscurity. It must

never be forgotten that in France politics are a trade.

At first M. Francion turned a deaf ear to all solicitations. "I am satisfied with my local sphere of usefulness," he said, and there was no affectation in his words. "Besides," he added, "I have an ideal of the perfection of government, and that ideal is impossible of attainment; I am, moreover, impatient of contradiction, when I know or fancy myself to be in the right; all things considered, I am better where I am and where I wish to remain." But his objections were of no avail, and the last entrenchments were carried by a deputation headed by the three local bankers, the secretary-general of the Prefecture himself, four gentlemen of the old quarter of the town, consequently to a certain extent belonging to the aristocracy, and a dozen notable business men. M. Francion had just given a reluctant assent, when there was a prearranged "entrance" of the Prefect, who flung his arms round his neck with joy and saluted him on both cheeks. "The Government means to support you most energetically. The whole of our influence is at your disposal," he exclaimed. "You need have no scruple in availing yourself of it. Whoever is with you we shall consider our friend, and so much the better for him; whoever is against you is our enemy, and so much the worse for him."

M. Francion held up his hand and stopped him at once. "One moment," he remarked: "that is not at all my programme. I am not going to force any one's convictions. I have friends in all the camps, and I am

not going to have those harassed who in virtue of their opinions will work against me. I am not going to fight this campaign on the principle of Molière's doctors. If people see a means of working out their political and social salvation without my physic, they are welcome to try."

For a moment the Prefect looked somewhat sheepish at the rejection of his "plan of campaign;" nevertheless, he endeavoured to improve the occasion. "Bravo!" he exclaimed: "we cannot do better than reproduce these words in our paper, and I'll see that it is done at once." He was as good as his word, although virtually infringing that cunning law which forbids candidates to address their electors in print until three weeks before polling day. He, however, merely carried out the spirit that presided at the framing of this law. For the last hundred years every successive dynasty has tried to gag its opponents; the founders of the Third Republic—that is, the founders in spite of themselves—hit upon a somewhat clever device in that direction. By the enactment just mentioned the opposition candidate is stricken dumb while the prefects are enabled to say and print whatsoever they like. The official candidate simply takes a leaf from the book of that Scotch minister who, passing the tavern on Saturday night, heard some of his flock indulge in ribald song. Next morning he gave them a long reprimand. "I'll not sully my lips with that coarse ditty," he concluded, "but my clerk will whistle it to you." The official candidate lets the prefect

"whistle the thing for him," and, as a matter of course, when his opponent appears upon the scene at the prescribed time he finds his guns "spiked." In populous constituencies, whether provincial or metropolitan, the contest is fought out upon a fairer basis, for wholesale bribing and promises are out of the question, but in country districts they produce their effect.

In justice to M. Guillaume Francion be it said that, though he had the start of his opponent, he made up his mind to canvass on the principles he had enunciated. It wanted still two months to polling day, but the next morning found him in the field. The best carriage being brought round—a trap would have looked too businesslike—he and the Prefect set out upon their electioneering rounds. Their first reception by the electors was gratifying indeed: the commune happened to be a friendly one; the mayor and municipal council had been apprised of the visit, and at a distance of a mile from the town the visitors could hear the bells ring, while the strains of the band of the local firemen—mellowed by that same intervening mile—fell gratefully on their ears. Those who have never witnessed such a demonstration, either real or reproduced on the stage, as in Sardou's *Bons Villageois*, can form no conception of the enthusiasm that prevails. M. Francion's horses were taken out, while he himself was almost carried to the *mairie*, where, amidst thunders of applause, he repeated the noble words, already reproduced by the paper devoted to the Government. "Vote according to your convictions," he wound up; "do not consider

yourself obliged to give me your suffrages. If the Republic means aught at all, it means absolute liberty for all. As for myself, happen what will, I will remain your friend."

About four and twenty hours later M. Francion and his political sponsor found that there was a dark side to the picture. They had already come well within sight of the second commune, which lay basking in the July sun, but no ringing of bells heralded their approach, and the band of the local fire brigade was mute; there was not so much as a glint of their helmets. When they alighted from the carriage, a village mongrel stood sniffing the legs of their horses, and an old crone opened her eyes with astonishment.

"Where is M. le Maire?" asked the Prefect.

"At work in the fields."

"And the municipal councillors?"

"They are getting their corn in."

The Prefect pulled a wry face and gave orders to fetch the authorities, who finally arrived upon the scene, out of breath, and by no means enthusiastic. "You knew we were coming," said the Prefect.

"We did, M. le Préfet," was the Mayor's answer; "but the work to be done is urgent and will wait for no man."

The *début* was not encouraging, but the Government official pretended not to notice it. "Here is our candidate, who is going to explain his views to you," he remarked.

The candidate himself, though, had been chilled to

the marrow by this freezing reception; he was not half so spontaneously eloquent as on the previous day, and that beautiful sentence about "every man's right to act upon his political convictions" came no longer glibly. In fact, it was considerably altered in its utterance, if not in the spirit, at any rate in the substance; for a vague uneasiness had taken hold of M. Francion that these rustics might take him at his word. He still said, "You are free to vote according to the dictates of your conscience;" but took care to add, "You'll bear in mind that I have lived among you for the last twenty years, and——" Then he suddenly checked himself. He was going to enumerate the services he had rendered to the locality, but his courage failed him, and he wound up his peroration with, "I shall not cease to look upon those who oppose me in a friendly light, but I shall be heartily sorry for them."

This little *contretemps* was almost forgotten during the next few days, amidst the cordial greetings M. Francion received everywhere, greetings which made the cold douche at Houilleville all the more painful when it came, by reason of the startling contrast. Houilleville is the most populous and important town of the constituency M. Francion was canvassing; there is a large factory there, consequently a strong contingent of working men, who had been carefully sounded, with the result that the supporters of M. Francion deemed it advisable to organize a much smaller meeting than was originally intended. This gathering, however, was merely to be the preface to a monster one, for by that time

M. Francion was on his mettle, and even more anxious than the Prefect for a victory in "the stronghold of the Opposition," while enlisting, at the same time, the sympathies of the employers of labour.

The writer of these pages is bound to acknowledge that he was indirectly to blame for this attempt. More than two years before that period, on the occasion of some anniversary connected with the co-operative movement in England, he (the writer) had told M. Francion many things about the "Pioneers" of Rochdale and the "Leeds Corn-Mills." M. Francion remembered those things, and fancied they might serve as a basis for an election address. Before long he discovered his mistake. The benevolent attention and signs of approval that had greeted the first part of his speech, which was confined itself to generalities, soon changed into hostile looks, and murmurs of disapproval on the part of the employers, when he began to develop his theory. For a moment or so the speaker stood nonplussed, but being too honest to retract what he considered the truth, he emphasized his previous remarks, winding them up with a "Tell me, messieurs, what more could you wish for under any government?"

Thereupon a big, hulking fellow rose from his seat. "I'll tell you, M. Francion," he exclaimed, "all that you've been saying just now is only so much fudge. Why don't you sum the employers up with one word—scum?"

And as if this had been the signal for which they had been waiting, the back of the hall broke into thunders

of applause, which virtually put a stop to the rest of the proceedings. M. Francion felt annoyed to a degree, and the comments and reproaches of his friends were not calculated to soothe his feelings.

"That's the result of trying to be popular," they kept repeating. "And do you know who the fellow is that gave you your answer? He is your first cousin's gardener."

"My cousin has got some nice people in his service," says M. Francion.

"That fellow will not be there very long, at any rate," replies a big-wig of the neighbourhood, standing in the group of which the candidate is the centre. "I am a friend of your cousin, and I'll make it my business to have him dismissed to-morrow."

M. Francion signifies neither approval nor disapproval of the proposed step, though, on his way to the hotel, he says to himself, "It would serve him right, the scamp. What business had he to fall foul of his betters in that way?" In the act of putting his hat on the table, he suddenly stops. "Hasn't a man the right to fall foul of his supposed enemies, whether they be his betters or not?" he says to himself. Then he sits down and argues the thing mentally. "After all, if I don't get to the Palais Bourbon, I shall not be one jot the worse for it; if this fellow loses his place, he may be left to starve, and there will be one of my fellow-creatures who will bear me a grudge to his dying day; I'd sooner do without the seat in the Chamber and without the grudge." And forthwith M. Francion indites a letter

to his cousin, asking him not to dismiss the too outspoken gardener; but as it is past midnight and the cousin's place a mile or so away, the letter is left on the table, where it catches the Prefect's eye the next morning as he enters the room to report progress; or, to speak by the card, the accumulating result of the gardener's interruption, which is the reverse of progress, as far as M. Francion's chances are concerned.

"The fellow is simply being made a hero of," sneers the functionary; "they drag him from one *café* to another, and then, to finish up, into the wine-shop."

In spite of his good resolutions, M. Francion, in his hurry to get into the thick of the battle at once, forgot to despatch the letter, which stared him in the face exactly twenty-four hours later, when the waiter brought him a communication from the gardener's employer, M. Francion's cousin, telling him that his servant had been dismissed. Those four and twenty hours, however, had considerably modified both M. Francion's views and feelings with regard to the situation and the principal instigator thereof. It is on record that Rabelais' hero, Gargantua, did not know whether he ought to feel sorry for the death of his wife, Badbec, or glad at the birth of his son, Pantagruel; so his feelings got mixed, and finally turned to gladness for the death of his wife and sorrow for the birth of his son.

Notwithstanding all that had happened, M. Francion wavered between a feeling of sorrow at the dismissal of the man and one of gladness at the proper show of family attachment on the part of his cousin; but here

the resemblance between him and the slayer of our Gog and Magog ceased, for he ended by being glad both of the dismissal and his kinsman's proof of affection.

That one proof made the subsequent defection of another member of the family all the harder to bear. Among the many unfavourable symptoms reported to him within the next few days, amidst the growing hostility or, what was worse, the chilling indifference of his best friends, the most terrible blow was that dealt him by his own nephew, of whom he was intensely fond, and who had hitherto repaid all his affection tenfold.

M. Jean Francion was, though comparatively young, an engineer of acknowledged merit, but he was also known to be a steadfast opponent of the Republican *régime;* consequently, instead of bestirring himself for his uncle, he preserved a strict neutrality and refused to budge an inch one way or other.

When told of this, M. Guillaume Francion fairly leaped off his chair with angry excitement. "What!" he exclaimed, foaming at the mouth, "a young fellow whom I look upon as my son, whom I have always treated as such! I'll go and see him myself." And, storming out of the room, he shouted for the ostler, helped him to put the horse into the trap, drove off at a breakneck pace, and never stopped until he reached his nephew's house, ten miles away. In spite of M. Jean Francion's hearty welcome, the candidate refused to sit down. "I wish to know, first of all, whether the report is true that you refuse me your support?" he asks angrily.

"Perfectly," replies the nephew, calmly. "My dear uncle, I consider the Government, in whose interest you are canvassing the constituency, beneath contempt; at the same time, I am too sincerely attached to you to oppose you personally. I would therefore ask you to let me remain absolutely neutral—to abstain from any step, one way or other."

M. Francion did not condescend to argue the matter; he simply bounced out of the house and into his trap. But on the way back he gave vent to his feelings. "That's what political passion may reduce a man to: to deny the ties of blood and kindred, to show the basest ingratitude, to throw affection to the winds," he said, almost aloud. "I have been terribly mistaken in that young man: I thought his heart was in the right place, and was going to set him up in life. But I will not be his dupe; I will have no dealings with a man capable of such disgraceful sentiments. I have done with him. Henceforth we are strangers."

M. Francion was as good as his word. A syndicate having been formed a few weeks later to work a recently discovered coalfield in the neighbourhood, and his nephew having been offered the managing directorship on condition of investing a certain amount of capital in the undertaking, the uncle had his revenge. There was not the smallest doubt about the value of the investment. M. Jean Francion did not apply personally to his uncle—in fact, he carefully abstained from doing so; but some of the engineer's friends broached the matter to the elder gentleman, who categorically refused.

In short, as polling day drew nigh, M. Francion senior became an altered being. The man who, as it were, needed to have his hand forced to induce him to stand for Parliament, now felt positively frantic with rage at the bare idea of failing in his attempt. Not that the desire grew more intense and fierce in proportion to its realization becoming more problematical: the frenzy sprang from the fear of becoming the laughing-stock of a successful opponent; and gradually the kind, good-natured M. Francion, who throughout his life had never condescended to reprisals, or even threats of such things, developed into a petty, grinding tyrant, with the Prefect as his grand vizier.

"I could almost answer for your success," said the latter one day, "but for those two hundred votes which the *juge de paix* at Valterre seems to hold in the hollow of his hand."

"You mean M. Parois," replied M. Francion; "but M. Parois is an upright, excellent magistrate: why should he withhold those votes from us?"

"That's just it: why? But he will withhold them —you may feel assured of that."

The *juge de paix* is a cross between our justice of the peace and a county court judge; in reality, he has not his exact counterpart in England. He can decide civil cases involving less than £40; and may inflict fines not exceeding £4, and sentences not exceeding five days for petty offences. That such a magistrate should be able to dispose of two hundred votes may seem strange to the English reader; it is a fact, nevertheless, especially

in country districts. Consequently, M. Francion and his henchman came to the conclusion that M. Parois would have to be dealt with in some way. M. Parois refusing to be dealt with in any manner suggested by them, he was simply removed, by the advice of the Prefect, to a seaside place two hundred miles away. The removal necessitated the co-operation of the Minister of Justice and the Keeper of the Seals; but that proved no obstacle. Scarcely had that danger been averted before there came the news of the Receiver of the Inland Revenue having turned traitor, or, to speak correctly, of his not exerting himself sufficiently vigorously in M. Francion's behalf. The Minister of Finance applied more drastic measures than his colleague of Justice. A week later the Receiver was peremptorily dismissed. Of course he might have got redress by applying to the "Council of State;" meanwhile he had been rendered innocuous for the time being. Fourteen mayors of communes, having failed to act with the energy expected of them by the Prefect, were suspended by him, M. Francion consoling himself with the thought that, their functions being non-stipendiary, they might, after all, be glad of the rest.

Promptness and firmness of action had become absolutely necessary, for it only wanted a fortnight to polling-day, and the Opposition stood defiantly, with arms akimbo and a provoking grin on its face, like the legendary Madame Angot. Strange to say, M. Francion's most intimate friends had all followed the example of M. Francion's nephew, though, as will be seen directly,

from less avowable motives. They "smelt plunder," and awaited his personal application for their support in order to put forward their wishes, or rather to let the candidate suggest them. I need only describe one interview; the rest were the same thing over again.

The candidate, on broaching the object of his visit, was told that his friend did not meddle with politics. "But," protested M. Francion, "we are traversing a period in which systematic abstention is almost a crime. Yes, I know what you are going to say: the thing will last out your time. But you have a son: have you no ambition for him? Should not you like to see him settled in some official position?"

"Of course I should."

"Very well; you may depend on me to obtain him such a position. The difficult part of the affair is to find a vacancy."

"That ought not to be difficult just now," came the immediate answer. "That registrar at Houilleville does you more harm than good. It would serve him right if he lost his post."

M. Francion looked at the Prefect, who "hung his head," and endeavoured, while admitting the justice of the speaker's remark, to plead for the man on the ground of his being utterly dependent upon the post for his living. This time, however, M. Francion stood firm; the registrar was dismissed, and the son of M. Francion's friends took his place.

M. Francion was strolling through the town of Candeval in company with the Prefect and one of the

members of the Prefectoral Council when the news was brought to him by telegram: and in order to celebrate his victory fitly he proposed to his companions to invite some of the constituents to whom they were talking to enter the tavern hard by. The proposal was accepted, the tavern was very full, and the conversation seemed most animated; but the advent of M. Francion and his group had the effect of casting a wet blanket on the spirits of those present, for it became very still all of a sudden, and M. Francion could not help commenting on the fact.

"That's not wonderful," laughs the member of the Prefectoral Council; "we happen to have hit upon the Opposition shop; they held a meeting here this morning in support of your adversary."

M. Francion is positively beside himself with anger.

"You had better take note of this, M. le Préfet," he says. "Here is a tavern, depending for its existence on the absolute tolerance of the authorities, and its proprietor rewards that tolerance by allowing illegal meetings in the place. That is very serious, and I am surprised you were not sooner informed of this. The place must be closed; it is a disgrace to the neighbourhood; the discussion of politics is forbidden by law in resorts of that class. Come, gentlemen,"—this to the electors whom he has invited,—"we had better go to the 'Rising Sun,' and perhaps one of you will just go and tell your friends that I shall have the honour of addressing them in half an hour on the situation."

The incriminated tavern is closed by order of the authorities.

One morning there came the news to M. Francion that a schoolmaster had been distributing the circulars of his rival candidate. In less than ten minutes M. Francion was closeted with the Prefect; the schoolmaster was to be dismissed, but once more the Prefect objected on the ground of the man having a wife and children.

"I am afraid, M. le Préfet, that you are allowing your private feelings to run away with your patriotic ones, and unfortunately at a moment when France is threatened with a revival of the most revolutionary passions. You are right—I do not wish him and his to starve; but, after all, he ought to have thought of that also before embarking in his campaign against the candidate of the Government whose bread he eats. To show that I have no personal ill-will against him, here is a hundred francs that will tide him over his difficulties until he gets another place."

But even M. Francion, rich as he is, cannot go on "giving a hundred francs" to each of his victims, who, as the critical hour draws nigh, increase. He had promised subsidies for many things, and as the Government was more than tardy in backing him pecuniarily, his exchequer became drained, while the wives and children of those who had stood in his way were stalking round the town like gaunt spectres, and were somewhat theatrically paraded as such by his opponents.

But M. Francion gained his seat; he was not long ago on the point of being invested with a portfolio,

and at the last elections he began a speech to his constituents with—"I am not going to force any one's convictions," etc., etc. The Prefect who helped him so manfully was promoted to a higher-class prefecture. What would have become of him if he had been vanquished? He would have lost his thousand a year, the palace in which he lived, the right to wear the silver-laced swallow-tail, and been left to shift for himself as best he might. The prefect, too, is the victim of a corrupt system, rather than of his own misdoings and that of others. There is no country in Europe where there is so much systematic electoral corruption as in France; and it cannot be too often repeated that nothing can cure this save the deliberate abolition of the prefectoral system. The late MM. Thiers and Louis Blanc endeavoured to abolish it; they failed.

CHAPTER XI.

Poverty-stricken Paris—Wretchedness in rags, wretchedness in a blouse, wretchedness in a black coat and chimney-pot hat—The working man the spoilt child of the Radical politician—A glimpse of the Government employé and the clerk in large industrial establishments—The clerk's wants and the workman's—The clerk's salary and the workman's pay—The clerk's family and the workman's—The positions compared—A glance at a "copying office" and its personnel—A true story—The general registry office for the unemployed — Attempted reform of the Paris Municipality.

POVERTY-STRICKEN Paris, like poverty-stricken London, is not invariably in rags. Whilst the quasi-philanthropic legislator takes the absence of broadcloth and chimney-pot hats as a sufficient plea for much visionary talk and sentimental endeavour, the owner of said articles of dress bitterly smiles to himself, and mentally queries when his turn to be legislated for will come. And echo answers, "When?" Misery in rags is very ugly; misery in a blouse is only one degree less ugly; they both appeal to the eyes, and through them to the heart: misery in a black coat, well brushed, with gloves on its hands, perhaps, has no such sensational means at its disposal; it is, nevertheless, equally deserving of sympathy and redress.

The winter just passed was a hard one in Paris;

business was almost at a standstill, and, at the very season when it should have been most brisk, political disturbances paralyzed it more than ever. A hundred voices were asking for help for the working man; not one was raised in behalf of the clerk or the warehouseman out of place. It is ever so. When the harvest fails, the first cry in Paris is, "How is the workman to eat?" An unhealthy quarter is to be destroyed. Before the pickaxe has laid the first hovel low, the air resounds with, "Where is the workman to live?"

This demand for charity for a class of people who, more than any other in Paris, are best able to take care of themselves is not only wholly unnecessary, it is a downright insult to them. However badly the French workman fares in slack times, his lot is ten times preferable to that of the educated jack-of-all-trades and master of none. The former may get half a week's work; he has his benefit societies to fall back upon in cases of illness; the latter has no resources of any kind. But the Paris workman is a political factor in the ceaseless party strife; the miserable outcast, who has not even the halfpenny to spare for a paper that will inform him how the political battle goes, counts for nothing with a lot of mendacious and interested flatterers, who are never tired of telling the artisan and craftsman that he is less favoured than the man who lives by his brains. The French workman who works and does not spout is worthy of respect and sympathy, material help he absolutely needs none. In spite of his continual agitation for higher wages—of which agitation he already

reaps the bitter fruits—his present income should be sufficient for his wants, with something to spare for pleasure. As a rule, he has but a small family, if married; in seven cases out of ten he is a bachelor, with an encumbrance perhaps, but still a bachelor. A stone-mason earns 5*s.* 5*d.* a day; a plumber and zincworker, 5*s.* This is the official tariff; but many contractors pay 10*d.* or 1*s.* 3*d.* per day more. Bronzeworkers, smiths, and house-painters earn as much as 8*s.* 4*d.* a day.

Let us compare the workmen's position with that of young men of the middle classes, of Government officials, of clerks whose education has certainly cost no less than £500 or £600. Such a one begins at a salary of £48 a year; that is, if he be fortunate enough to find a situation. If he have any influence, and be capable of passing his examinations in the third year, his salary is increased to £60 per annum—thus 3*s.* 4*d.* a day, minus a reduction of 5*d.* for a kind of providential fund, by which he does not benefit until he has attained the age of sixty. But let us suppose him to be in receipt of his whole salary, he then only earns as much as the boy of fourteen who carries the hod and mixes the mortar.

In the railway companies it is still worse. An employé in the Lyons Company, who happens to be a personal friend, excites the envy of his fellow-clerks because he began at £72 a year. There are hundreds who, after five years of unrelaxed duty and toil, have only risen to £52. Now let us look at the difference in their respective wants. No one in Paris slights the workman who wears a linen blouse, a cloth cap,

hobnailed boots, and a coarse shirt that lasts him a week. Were the employé to present himself in such a garb, he would be dismissed there and then. In order to appear cleanly, he must eke out his bread. The workman has his breakfast, or rather luncheon, at the wine-shop; his soup and beef, called an *ordinaire,* costs him 3½*d.*; he adds 2*d.*-worth of wine, 1½*d.*-worth of cheese or fruit,—total, 7*d.* The employé who would be ill-advised enough to go anywhere but to a restaurant, even of the meanest description, would lose the consideration of his fellows. Not that the food is better than at the wine-shop, it is probably worse, but he is obliged to incur the extra expense for appearance's sake.

The workman's wife works like himself—does charing, and can find as much of it as she likes to do. There are thousands of single persons in Paris who have a little lodging of their own, and are only too glad not to be obliged to keep a servant. The charwoman is paid from fifteen to twenty-five francs a month, according to the size of the apartment. If she have no children, she can manage to look after four or five; if she have, she can put the little ones to minding schools (*crêches*) especially provided by the municipality. The workman has married a girl who worked before her marriage, and who thinks it no hardship to do so after: the employé has probably wedded a girl of his own class, who, in consideration of the little marriage portion she brought, thinks herself absolved from all work in the future. Beside, if she be not unwilling, she is probably unable;

pride, false if you will, often steps in and prevents her. A chapter on women of the lower-middle classes would lead me too far from my subject—sufficient to say that selling fruit in the streets, or going to the public wash-house, would damage the future career of her husband. As a saleswoman or workwoman, she is of no use whatever. Women who embrace that career begin very young, and are as a rule too independent or conceited to marry any one their equal in station. If, therefore, she happen to have children, she must either look after them herself, or send them out to nurse. The latter method would probably cost more than her work would bring. As for sending them to crêches provided for the working man's child, the thing could not be thought of; they would not be accepted; they do not belong to the working classes, who are the elect of the Radical party, provided they elect them in return. The clerk and his wife are the offspring of the bugbear of Radicalism—the bourgeois. The municipality of Paris consists of eighty members, exactly one-tenth of whom are Conservative.

The argument need be pursued no further; nor need I do more than incidentally point out the causes of the artisan's independence, and the enforced slavishness of the employé. The artisan has a marketable commodity to offer. To enter into competition with him one must have the like, and the acquiring of his skill has demanded a six or seven years' apprenticeship. Any man of average intelligence can discharge the duties of a clerk. Every workman is more or less of a

specialist; the more the better, provided it be within the limits of his own trade. The clerk, on the contrary, is a generalist—one might almost say a general in an army where there are nothing but generals. If the workman's employer annoys him, he sends him to the devil, takes his tool-basket and seeks another shop. The employé must grin and bear, for another shop is not easily found, and meanwhile he must eat, and he has no society money to keep him from starvation. The workman who applies for work is put to the bench; half an hour's watching on the foreman's part settles his position. When the clerk presents himself, he is asked for a reference; why he has left his last place? His former employer may, and often does, say anything he likes. The workman's former master is not even asked. If the workman knows his business, the "guv'nor" who discharged him is *primâ facie* in the wrong with all the former's comrades. If an employé be dismissed, there is more room for the beginners who aspire to take his place. As for the employé finding a place in a Government office, such a thing is not dreamt of in his wildest dreams. He knows but too well that every one who enters there abandons all intention of ever leaving, except by being carried out feet foremost.

I might pursue the parallel by showing the workman in his hours of recreation, and the employé under similar conditions, provided the latter ever have the chance of any recreation. The workman in his blouse sits amongst the gods for tenpence, and enjoys himself like his namesakes on Olympus. That unfortunate

black coat and chimney-pot hat prevent the poor employé from doing the same. I have already outrun my space in semi-statistical remarks; let me come to the more amusing part of the two-sided sketch. One more remark. The Municipal Council of Paris have for some years, and concurrently with English statesmen, been moving heaven and earth for the better accommodation of the working classes. Those civic fathers have my sympathies, but might they not devote a little thought to those who are less able to help themselves than the working classes? The honest and unprejudiced workman would assuredly not grudge his poorer and less independent brother, who only works with his brain, a share of wholesome legislation.

I spoke just now of those who, though poor, are not altogether without resources. Three francs a day, if regularly earned, may not provide stalled ox to dine off, or anything half as clean as the stall of that animal to lie down in at night, but, at any rate, it will keep a man from downright starvation, and supply him with a truckle bed or pallet on which to rest his weary limbs. He may have to wash his own shirts and socks, and darn and mend them himself; he may have to go to bed in the dark to save his lamp-oil for the hebdomadal renewal of the fictitious gloss on his hat; the penny bottle of ink may be more frequently employed upon the seams of his coat than in the discharge of his limited correspondence. He may have to do all this; but the two implacable horses that are said to be yoked to our miserable car of life—hunger and thirst—will

not take him at a gallop to the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns, and whence the poor clerk would not return if he could.

Compared to what I have seen, that poor clerk's pilgrimage here below is still a path strewn with roses. To determine what a well-educated, intelligent, and honest young or middle-aged man may come to if he have not a trade and cannot find regular employment, one must have lived, as I did, next door to a copyist's, or what in England is known by the generic term of law-writer's office. In England, however, a law-writer is comparatively well paid. He receives one penny per folio of seventy words. He need not be a rapid penman to earn sevenpence an hour. I have known some who earned double, a few who earned three times the money. As a rule, the copying is confined to legal documents. But if the copyist knows something of engrossing besides, he can make a comfortable income. In Paris the copying-offices undertake work of any and every sort, from the addressing of envelopes or wrappers for advertisements to the closer transcription of a five-act drama; but a fair, or even excellent, handwriting is not sufficient. There are at least three or four different kinds of ornamental calligraphy which it is absolutely necessary to know. The simple knowledge of ordinary roundhand counts for nothing. Fortunately almost every young Frenchman is about the same in that respect, namely, a very good penman.

How and why I became intimately acquainted with the principal of the copying-office is of no interest to

the reader. If poverty makes one acquainted with strange bed-fellows, journalism, especially of the descriptive kind, is even better calculated to extend one's circle of familiars. Suffice it to say that I was a frequent visitor to my neighbour's place of business. He was certainly the least educated of his own class. I never felt bold enough to inquire into his past career; he might have been anything but a gentleman, notwithstanding his manners, which were invariably polite even with his employés. He called them his machines, and as such he treated them. The establishment consisted of a bedroom and adjacent dressing-closet, transformed for the nonce, with the aid of forms and desks such as one sees in a public school, into offices; besides the outer hall and the *salon*, now dignified with the name of "director's cabinet." It was on the ground-floor, but the windows were never open, either in summer or in winter. The dean of the fraternity was a most curious figure, objectively considered. Immensely tall, with a grey beard descending to his chest, he looked sixty, though he was barely forty-five. He had been a quarter-master-sergeant in an African cavalry regiment. After fourteen years of active service, he quitted the army, and whilst waiting for some Government desk, or anything that might present itself, had turned copyist. French soldiers are not famed for their cleanliness; the colonial contingent does not even make pretence of that virtue. The former quarter-master-sergeant proved no exception to the rule. Dressed in a linen suit that had been white once upon a time, but had

now assumed an indescribable hue; his toes sticking out of his shoes, that resented any attempt at such mending as their owner had given them by means of red packthread; a battered, rusty chimney-pot hat; the visible absence of shirt barely compensated by the lavish display of a crimson-chequered handkerchief, plentifully besprinkled with snuff and the whitened ashes from a black cutty pipe, the man looked the incarnate representation of such a vagabond as Murillo might have loved to portray. In spite of the warning against drunkenness, and the recommendation as to clean linen, set forth on a card nailed to the wall, I never saw him sober but once. Truth compels me to state that it was not his fault. The principal had refused him money for two days, supplying him simply with food and black coffee. Clean, or even washed, I have never seen him.

Next to him came a German who spoke fluently five modern languages, and translated Tacitus or Plato into any one of them. "Betwixt the cup and the lip there is many a slip, especially if you get too drunk; betwixt the pipe and your labial prehension the chances of disappointment are less: I prefer the latter mode of drowning care." I quote his sentence literally, as he altered it, without the least hesitation. As long as he had tobacco, he minded neither cold nor fatigue. However empty his stomach, his enormous pipe had to be filled. When he had neither money wherewith to buy, or credit wherewith to get the weed on trust, he went into the street to pick up half-finished cigars or

cigarettes. With a sufficient quantity for the night or the day, he felt as happy as a king.

Individual portraits of the remainder must be dispensed with. A common likeness ran through them all; it was bred from the seemingly utter lack of hope that life had anything better in store for them than their present lot. With the exception of the Chasseur d'Afrique and the German, they were all young; even my Teuton had not reached thirty. He was the only one who ever looked at a newspaper or a book. A good many had been non-commissioned officers, or employed during their time of enforced military service in the administrative departments; ever after that a stirring life became out of the question. One was a "general utility" at the Théâtre de la Rue l'Auvergne, which theatre has been pulled down since; he was called the "Actor." The latest comer was baptized the "Minister," because, at his first appearance, he boasted of a decent suit of black and spotless linen. When he left, mainly at my instigation, the suit was no longer black, the linen was by no means white. I happened to be in the office when he came to ask for employment. So different was his appearance from that of the general run of the candidates that the principal was taken in by it. He put down his pipe, and put on his most engaging manner, thinking that the new-comer was a client, not a would-be employé. A spirit of change came over the former's countenance at the first intimation of the real errand. The pipe was taken up once more; it did not even take a violent pull to make it aglow again, the

interval had been so short. The preliminary examination with regard to his caligraphy, punctuation, and spelling having proved satisfactory, he was admitted there and then. It was luncheon time, and the office being deserted, he was given a vaudeville of one act to copy. Even a Frenchman's love of any and everything connected with the theatre was proof against that insane production. The Minister, as he was henceforth called, worked uninterruptedly at it until the others came in; and then I saw him start, and well he might. They had been lunching—copiously for them, because work happened to be plentiful. They smelt horribly of cheap wine, and still cheaper brandy. Some were smoking; those that were not had their hollow cheeks puffed out with a quid.

With the free masonry bred from poverty, they told him at once about his expectations. The work he was engaged upon consisted of eighty pages, and would be paid 2 frs. 50 centimes. Eighty pages of twenty-five lines, written in the style required, would at least take eighteen hours. Suppose a man could remain at it for twelve hours at a stretch, his day's wage would amount to fifteen-pence. Little enough, Heaven knows, and so the new-comer seemed to think; but his fellow-slaves reassured him by telling him that there was a cheap cookshop hard by where one lunched well enough for fivepence. They further informed him that he need not go to the expense of a lodging; he could do as they did —sleep in the office. He thanked them, and happened to remark that he did not mean to make copying his

profession; he had merely taken to it while looking out for something else. He said it in good faith; but, oh, for the wan smile of some, the riotous laughter of others, at this to them ingenuous confession! The German quoted Dante: "'All hope abandon ye who enter here;'" the others were not so classic in their comments. "Connu, beau masque, va te promener" — *Anglicé:* "We have heard that tale before. Go and see if the weather holds up."

Yes, they passed the night there, most of them—first of all, because they could not afford to pay for a room; secondly, a great deal of the work arrived late, sometimes at twelve o'clock. However frequently this might happen, the announcement made by the principal was generally hailed with joy and a preliminary carouse. Remember, it meant three francs, for the work generally consisted of theatrical parts that required legible but by no means studied handwriting. At about eleven or half-past they were all at their posts, more or less tipsy. The work was there on their desks. As a rule they looked at it; then, putting their heads on their folded arms, announced their intention to take half an hour's snooze. Those who remained awake, and set to at once, were told to call the others. The Sybarites stretched themselves supine on the floor, the Stoics slept anyhow.

To see half a dozen, or even more, of those outcasts asleep in a row on the floor, keeping up a bass accompaniment to the treble of those who had selected less comfortable positions with their arms on the table,

one would have thought that their lives were absolutely free from care. Such poverty as theirs very fortunately does not banish sleep. It is the sheerest nonsense to say so, and I am speaking from experience. Only those who have still a sense of their own misery left toss and turn upon their wretched pillows, and my friends the copyists certainly did not belong to that class. They seemed to have abandoned all hope of bettering their lot, and to have become callous in consequence. Therefore, woe to the comrade who was ill-advised enough to wake them on the pretext that the work had to be done by a certain time. The latest comer, the Minister, tried the experiment a few nights after his arrival. He never tried again. As if by magic a dozen feet were simultaneously and spontaneously brought into contact with any and every part of the body of the disturber. Fortunately, the shoes of the kickers were not formidable. Nor did the disturber get much consolation from those who had remained awake. The German, who never opened his lips save to take his pipe from them, infringed his self-imposed rule this time, to opine that it served the Minister right for interfering. The others made no comment, but soon showed that the temptation of so delicious a snooze was not to be resisted. After selecting the softest board of the by no means immaculate floor, they invited the Minister to do the same. He declined, saying that he would go to bed for good when his part of the work was done. They simply jeered at him, for they knew very well that it was not sufficient for him to do his own

part. And so it turned out. Though at about four o'clock the whole of the staff was hard at it, much time had been lost, and when the principal made his appearance at half-past seven, the business in hand was by no means finished. As I have already said, the principal never swore. He simply told them that, unless the whole of it was done by eleven he would give every man Jack the sack. With that tendency to cohesion, which is another feature among the poor of that kind, those who had finished their share remained to help; the Minister was amongst them. It was one o'clock in the afternoon before he could go to his garret to get a few hour's rest. He had been exactly twenty-nine hours seated at his desk, for, unable to swallow such food as his few pence could command at a cookshop, he mostly contented himself with a few saveloys and a piece of bread and cheese, washed down with a mouthful of cheap wine. His twenty-nine hours' work had produced a fraction less than four shillings, and, it being Saturday, he found himself in possession of a few francs of ready money which he had not been obliged to anticipate, the fag end of the week's wage.

For, owing to the utter impecuniosity of most of the machines, they received each a franc in advance every morning. On Saturday the accounts were settled. Those who had been more than commonly lazy or drunk during the week, often did far less than seven francs' worth of work. There was one man somewhat older than the rest, except the Chasseur d'Afrique, who scarcely ever did more than seven francs' worth; he was

very slow. Nevertheless, under those circumstances, the principal always gave them a few sous—not out of kindness, but from motives of policy. He had the whole of his crew in his power. They were his chattels, and they knew it. They also knew that, with the exception of the Minister and one other, they were liable to be locked up at any moment as vagabonds without a fixed domicile. One must have lived in France and know the ways and manners of the French police, to grasp the full significance of the words "locked up at the depôt." On Saturday, then, the accounts were settled. The principal—crafty, mean, as only Frenchmen in business have the secret of being—made it a rule not to pay each one the few francs owing. He reckoned up the lump sum, and paid it in two or three gold pieces. It was like showing water to a set of wretches dying of thirst. One of them (they took it in turns) was sent out for change to the nearest ham and beef, tobacco, or wine shop, and to bring in such things as were wanted. Once, once only, I witnessed a scene of consternation. The machine entrusted with the money, failed to return. Finding himself in possession of fifty francs, he could not withstand the temptation. He was never seen or heard of again. He was a Belgian non-commissioned officer, and had deserted into France.

In justice to his comrades, be it said, though ravenous with hunger, they would not denounce him to the police. His discovery would have been almost certain. The one who suggested the thing had to make himself scarce for the next few hours. It was in the middle of the

summer. The principal, who had a cottage in the country, would not be back until Monday. It was Saturday, twelve o'clock. Fortunately I had some money, which I gave them until then. Without it every one of these fourteen men would have starved for nearly forty-eight hours. Not that this did not occur frequently enough in winter when work was scarce, and when the principal suspended the arrangement of one franc each morning. At such times the spectacle became too harrowing. No one of them dared go out, lest in his absence some job should come in and be distributed before he came back. Besides, whither could he go? His application elsewhere would have been received with derision. At any rate, there was the red-hot stove; it filled the room with unhealthy fumes, but it was very cold outside. The few that had until then been able to have lodgings of their own had been compelled to give them up. Their desks now contained their earthly belongings—a soiled shirt, and, perhaps, a pair of socks.

The smell was dreadful, yet the windows remained closed, lest the heat should escape. Then two of the men fell ill, and were sent to the hospital. There was an attempt at a stampede: the young ones got frightened; the elders said, "One might as well die here as elsewhere." Elsewhere, of course, meant in the streets. The chasseur lifted his voice in deprecation of any attempt at flight. He lived upon a halfpenny loaf a day. The remainder of the few pence went in brandy.

But the Minister made an effort, or rather I made it for him. The sobriquet that had been given him in

virtue of his respectable suit of clothes was no longer applicable. The coat had grown rusty, the trousers were fringed, the shoes heelless and broken, the hat battered and greasy. He told me he could drive. A situation at the Compagnie Parisienne was out of the question. Each man is required to deposit at least two hundred francs security. I found him a place as a stable helper. It was time.

My readers may think this is a fancy sketch. The office exists at the present day. At any rate, it was there a twelvemonth ago, when I went to see my former concierges. I feel certain, though, that the wretchedness of former days has been increased by the general introduction of the typewriter. The office is situated between the Rue Rochechouart and the Rue des Martyrs, opposite one of the Government colleges which turns out its scholars by the hundred every year. To look at both establishments reminds one of the practices of the ancient Egyptians, who spent immense sums of money in the artificial hatching of chickens, which they afterwards left to starve, or else threw to their household gods, the sacred tom cats.

Another parasite of the shame-faced poor of Paris is the proprietor of the so-called registry office, who, in spite of the repeated attempts of the municipality to supplant him, still flourishes like the green bay tree. As at present constituted, the general registry office for the unemployed of both sexes is simply a trap for the unwary and helpless. There are, of course, honourable exceptions, such as the ordinary registry offices for

domestic servants of both sexes. They are well-conducted, the formalities are of the simplest. The lady manageress takes down the wants of the would-be employer, and two hours afterwards there is a veritable procession at the latter's door. The choice may be difficult, but the means of choosing are amply provided. The system adopted at the Soho Bazaar and various kindred institutions in London, of selecting servants on the spot, is as yet in embryo. The same statement as regards respectability holds good more or less with regard to registry offices for special trades, such as hairdressers, garçons de café, etc. Most of those craftsmen and waiters know exactly what they want, and are sufficiently sharp not to be deceived by promises or advertisement, however plausible. Not so the poor and honest nondescripts, male and female, who are willing to turn their hands and brains to anything that may permanently provide them with a roof and a meal.

They are seated on the greasy and tattered settee that runs along the whole of the wall of the spacious room that does duty as an entrance hall. One need not be endowed with much power of observation to notice the glaring contrast to the waiting-room of the office for domestic servants. There everything is bright and cleanly, and the windows look upon the street. The little servant-girls in their neat black gowns and bonnets, the portly cooks, somewhat rubicund of face, the dapper coachmen, stiff in their cravats, the valets de chambre, frizzled, perfumed, and pomaded, laugh and chatter, and amuse themselves like the gods on Olympus.

But for the bright sunlight shining in, and the absence of refreshments, it would look like a picture of "high life below stairs." In the general registry office the room is dark, the windows look upon an inner court, dark and deep, like a well. Not a word is exchanged above a whisper, and then it is only to make an inquiry. A mere glance at its occupants tells of their pains to make themselves look respectable, nay, presentable. The threadbare black coat, inked at the seams, and lightly buttoned across the chest; the too brilliant hat, carefully and tenderly poised on the rusty knees of the baggy trousers fringed at the bottom or else bordered with some coarse dark braid, but still showing the doubtful sock and suffering shoe;—all these tell of the shamefaced and terrible misery, that would fain lie down and give up the battle, but for that clinging to life at which pessimists rail. A glance at the women is still more heartrending. The relative cleanliness and attempted elegance of dress call forth pity mixed with wonder. One guesses at the horrible reality hidden beneath the darned gown, the lustreless bonnet, and the limp feather curled up, perhaps with a pair of scissors heated at the tallow candle in the small hours of the morning, when there was no fire in the black gaping grate, and the fingers were numb with cold.

These are some of the victims whom the private registry office sets itself to ensnare. Paris possesses perhaps five hundred of these, more or less alike. Hard by the Magasins du Louvre and the Palais-Royal there is a maze of narrow, tortuous streets, where the sunlight

rarely penetrates, even on a fine day. With its forbidding looking courts and murderous looking alleys, it represents a corner of old Paris which has been left standing amid and in spite of modern improvements. On nearly every other house there are two red signboards hooked to the lintels of the worm-eaten doors. Every plate displays a dozen or so of offers of employment, conveyed in doubtful orthography. A secretary at a salary of 2000 francs, a bookkeeper at 1800 francs, a cashier at 4000 francs; several clerks at 1600 francs, a lady's companion at 1000 francs—the demands never vary all the year round. The victims ought to know this, but they do not. Most of them are strangers in Paris. They came up from the country possessed of a little money. They had heard so many wonderful tales of that great city that they felt sure of finding a situation. And, in fact, they did find the situation almost immediately; 200 francs a month in some large industrial establishment just recruiting its personnel. More fortunately still, the small sum they had brought with them would at least yield 10 per cent. interest, because their new employer would have considered it very shabby to pay them no interest on the moneys they were bound to deposit as guarantees. The tale need be pursued no further. During the first and only month of their employment, the employés had noticed a wonderful increase of fellow-employés, and rejoiced accordingly, for it showed the prosperity of the venture. On the 31st, however, the smash came; the manager absconded. The trick is so well known at the Préfecture

de Police, that it is classed under a separate category—"le vol au cautionnement."

Behold the poor devil thrown penniless upon the streets. Probably he knows no one. But never mind; his illusions are not all gone. He is a B.A.; he was a bookkeeper in the provincial town whence he came, so he will try to be the same in Paris, and he repairs once more to the private room of the director of the private registry office. For unlike that for servants, the former has a director of the male sex, who takes particular care to let his victims wait a considerable time on the pretext of being "very busy." The director has already heard of his client's misfortune, and condoles with him. Fortunately he has just what he wants, a situation as cashier. But a guarantee is an absolute necessity.

A similar guarantee is wanted for a secretaryship, the particulars of which he has on his books. The victim says he would be satisfied for the present with a simple clerkship.

"A simple clerk's place?" is the answer; "I have just given away the last one."

The crestfallen, poor, deluded creature turns away, when the director calls him back.

"Listen, young man; I take an interest in you. I have a situation of trust open at one of my friend's. The fee is three francs. Pay them, and I will send you to him immediately."

The victim remonstrates, on the plea that he has already paid the regulation money.

"Yes," answers the director, "but that was for situations open to any and every one—for situations inscribed on the register. This is a private affair. Never mind, if the terms do not suit you, there is no harm done." And the director makes a show of ending the interview.

The poor fellow hesitates. Three francs is not much, but he hasn't them. "I shall be back in an hour's time," he gasps.

And he is back. In the interval, he has probably pawned his vest and Heaven knows what, and he hands the director the required three francs. In exchange for which he receives a carefully sealed letter to a gentleman who lives very far away. When he reaches the place, the situation has just been promised to some one else.

The trick of advertising in the trade circulars is simply an amplification of the above, for none of these registry offices have any situations to offer. The law, nevertheless, is powerless. The Municipal Council think they have hit upon the right method of putting an end to the cruel robbery of the most helpless of all victims, the poor and honest who are willing to work. The Labour Exchange (la Bourse du Travail) on the one hand, the gratuitous registry offices opened at the Mairie of every Paris arrondissement on the other, will, they trust, leave, in the course of time, little to glean for the adventurer who battens and fattens on the inexperienced who flock to the capital in shoals. As yet, the results have not come up to their expectations, the slow progress of their contemplated reform being mainly owing to that invincible spirit of opposition inherent in

the French themselves. They irresistibly remind one of that young dandy who, when tight trousers came into fashion, went to his tailor and ordered several pairs.

"But," said he to the Sartor, "if I can get into them, I won't take them."

They, the French, are for ever clamouring for Government aid in this or that social or economical reform. When the Government yields to the pressure, the public refuse to avail themselves of the reform. Truly, the municipal registry office is not the best devised scheme of its kind. It merely consists of two registers; one for employers to record their wants, another for the poor applicants to inscribe their offers and qualifications. There is no intermediary between the employer and the would-be employed, for the official in charge of those registers is like Dickens's "Jo"—he has heard nothing, seen nothing, knows nothing. He has no interest in the matter and affects none, for his charge is merely nominal. He himself does not write a line. The two registers are merely "visitors' books." An inquiry as to particulars, either from the employer or would-be employed, would make him stare as only a French official can stare, for the whole of his training is based upon the assumption that it is his place to ask questions, not to answer them. At the cost of about £75 per annum to each arrondissement, the whole affair might have been perfected; that is, if a score of clever young men, not suffering from red-tapism on the brain, had been engaged. As it is,

employers say that the register open to their inspection is like the traditional bottle of hay in which they have to look for the needle, etc.

Enough; the good intentions of the Paris Municipality have once more provided a pavement for a hell, and the pavement itself will probably not be worn smooth by those for whom it was intended. It is ever so with the French. To be convinced of this we have only to look at their pawnbroking system, with which I propose to deal in my next chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

Poverty-stricken Paris still—The paternal pawnshop, otherwise "Le Mont de Piété"—The English would-be philanthropist with regard to it—Parliamentary Commissions and their theoretical result—The paternal pawnshop as it is—The impecunious Englishman face to face with "uncle;" the impecunious Frenchman face to face with "aunt"—Documentary evidence with regard to one's identity—The pawnshop as a borrower—Formalities—The valuation of property—To whom such valuation is left—Rate of interest, etc.—Illicit traffic in pawn-tickets—Does the French pawnshop offer the best guarantee for the tracing and recovery of stolen property?—Proofs to the contrary—The tailors at the central pawnshop.

An attempt, however incomplete, to describe some of the features of "Poverty-stricken Paris" must necessarily include a mention of "the paternal pawnshop"—"le Mont de Piété," as the French call it. I am the more inclined to devote a few pages to that institution, inasmuch as every now and then an English would-be philanthropist comes forward with a scheme for reforming our pawnbroking system by remodelling it on the Continental one. The French capital being not only the nearest, but also the most pleasant holiday resort, the commissioners, parliamentary or otherwise, entrusted with the study of the problem, would probably go no farther than Paris in search of information.

The French pawnshop, in fact, does not differ materially, from kindred establishments all over the Continent; at any rate, the modified versions of it in Germany and Holland would not commend themselves to the commissioners, even if they took the trouble to inquire into their more vexatious working, so we may take it for granted that the commissioners would come back delighted with their journey, charmed with the affability of the French officials, who showed and told them everything, except that which no French official dare, can, or will show or tell, but which I shall take the liberty of telling.

In the first place, the commissioners would probably be most favourably impressed with the difference in the rate of interest charged. It is some years since I had the pleasure of a business interview with "my uncle," but, unless my memory misgives me, the interest he charges on loans is five-pence in the pound for every month; consequently, something like five and twenty per cent. per annum. I say pleasure, because I have the reverse of disagreeable recollections of my conversations with the pawnbroker's young man, when the business I had come upon was out of hand; for in London a fellow may be hard up and in want of temporary accommodation, but he is a man for all that, even if the guinea that stamps him a poor man comes out of uncle's till. The case is different in Paris. A visit to the pawnshop entails the momentary loss of all dignity. One is treated like a beggar; and, to the credit of the French be it said, that no beggar is treated by

them with the same unconcern with which the French pawnbroking official treats the man or woman who comes to borrow money.

The moment one enters the room, bare to the verge of poverty, its whitewashed walls remind one of a prison, and the illusion is heightened by the presence of half a dozen municipal guards, who sit motionless on a bench, ready to swoop down upon the would-be borrower should he fail to reply to any and every question the clerk may choose to put to him with regard to his identity, or the ownership of the pledge tendered by him. The resemblance to a malefactor entering a prison is manifest in more respects than that one; for the applicant, on entering the room, loses his name, and becomes a number—which is indicated on the small wooden cube he receives in exchange for his chattel. The latter disappears into an inner room, while its owner remains standing in front of a wooden partition, elbow high, behind which are his judges. The little boxes in which a man may indulge his hopes and fears and often his sorrow in England, do not exist in Paris. You have come to ask a service of the State, and you must submit to the conditions under which the service is granted; for the loan of smaller or larger sums of money, at the rate of 9½ per cent., is considered a real service. Truly, the State pawnshop has not a penny of its own to lend, and borrows this self-same money—which it flings to you as you would not fling a bone to a dog, or doles out to you like a mendicant—at 3½ per cent. But, then, the State pawnshop is a respectable and solvent

institution, while the would-be borrower, though he may be respectable, is, at any rate for the time being, not solvent, else he would not be in urgent want of so paltry a sum as ten, or twenty, or a hundred francs. That is the sentiment which throughout the transaction prevails in the mind of the French official—the most arbitrary, impolite and red-tape-ridden semblance of a man, the most slavish of tuft-hunters to his superiors, the most insolent despot to the public, whose servant he is.

Your pledge, then, has been taken from you, and, for the next quarter or half-hour, you stand straining your ears for your number to be called out from an inner room, and for the verdict on your pledge, equally thrown at you from that distance,—a verdict from which there is no appeal. The sum named is often a sixth part of the value of the article, as distinguished from its cost; never more than a fourth. Meanwhile, every one has been listening to what is going on, and, though it is a feeling of false shame, one is glad to have the matter over, so one mutters a faint assent. Besides, it would be of no use going farther, for elsewhere one might fare worse; one would certainly not fare better. For, though France turns out ready-made officials by the thousand, she has not as yet succeeded in founding a University chair for a professor of the pawnbroking business, consequently the valuing of the pledges is entrusted to a trio of auctioneers and appraisers, who manage the whole of the business of the three head and twenty branch establishments of the capital. Their

remuneration is one-half per cent. on the amount of money lent, if the pledges are redeemed; three per cent. more if the pledges are sold after the regulation time, thirteen months. Out of this half per cent. the auctioneers and appraisers have to pay their assistant-valuers, and to make good any and every deficiency in the event of their having lent too much; viz. the difference between the sum advanced and the amount realized by the sale of the pledge, *minus* nine per cent. which the State pawnshop appropriates and divides as follows: six per cent. interest, three per cent. for expenses of administration and warehousing.

As I have already said, the State pawnshop borrows money on bonds payable to bearer at an interest varying from three and a half to four per cent. It charges six, the surplus goes to the funds of the Assistance Publique (*Anglice*, Public Charity Department), which in reality ought to provide the money, but which never does, seeing that it has never sufficient to meet current demands upon its purse.

But to return to the auctioneer-appraiser who has to make good any deficiency, but does not benefit by a surplus on the pledge, which surplus remains at the disposal of the original owner of the pledge for two years, it is but natural that the appraiser should be careful not to lend too much. He keeps on safe ground by lending only a quarter of the value. A great consolation, indeed, it is to a man who wants a thousand francs, and who offers to deposit value to the amount of fifteen hundred, to be told that

he can only get four hundred, but that he will be charged no more than nine and a half per cent. on the loan! Yet that is what happens ninety-nine times out of a hundred. The Government has attempted several times to remedy this state of things, but without result.

When I said that the State pawnshop rarely lends more than a sixth part of the value of a pledge, never more than a fourth, I overrated the pawnshop's generosity. The Government is well aware of this fact, but helpless as it appears to be in many things, it is utterly helpless where the alteration of a system would entail a very heavy expense, and a complete revolution of existing arrangements. Hence, the Government is to a certain extent bound to go on as before. It could at best apply a palliative; a radical cure is out of the question. Some ten years ago I remember its asking for seven millions of francs to redeem the pledges of ten francs and under. This was for Paris alone. The demand was refused on the plea that the tickets relating to those pledges were no longer in the hands of the original borrowers, but had been sold to dealers in such tickets. "Sold," is merely the conventional term, for those tickets are not so much sold as pledged; but seeing that there is a law against that sort of traffic, or that there is supposed to be one—for one fails to see in what respect a pawn-ticket differs from a railway or any other share as far as security for money lent goes—the ticket is nominally sold with the option of repurchase within

two or three months. The regulation price is ten per cent. of the value the ticket represents, and the interest charged for the accommodation is something enormous, no less than a hundred and twenty per cent. per annum.

The Government proposed that the State pawnshop should open offices to do this business of lending money on the tickets, and inconveniently logical people asked at once why, if a ticket still had value enough to be a security, the pledge it represented could not be taken in at the beginning at a higher price. The why is easily seen, though those logical people remained persistently insensible to it. The auctioneer-appraisers who do the valuing of the State pawnshops say this: "You make us responsible for the losses, consequently we will provide, or, at any rate, try to provide against them by lending ridiculously small sums. If you find that the arrangement no longer suits you, you have only to appoint employés of your own to value." This the State pawnshop cannot possibly do, for various reasons. First of all, it would be impossible to find such employés. That kind of business requires not only a long training, but an absolute callousness to human suffering and the various appeals for kindness on the part of the borrowers; the callousness might be provided, but the business training and experience would not be easy to find at a short notice. Another thing; the employé not being responsible for the losses his generosity would entail, would be always generous for a consideration, and those who know most of the corruption of French Government officials, viz.

the Chamber of Deputies itself, would not care to put the thing to the test. Consequently, when it was proposed that the Government should do what private enterprise does, namely, advance money on the pawn-tickets, the whole affair was allowed to drop.

To return to the intending borrower, whom I left waiting to receive the money for his chattel. Nothing seems easier than to give that money to him as they do in London, and to have finished with him there and then. But such a simple proceeding would not suit the French mania for complicating any and every transaction, by the creation of a lot of documents that make an Englishman stare. Nor would such a simple process be right according to the assumed notions that the pawnshop of the State should be very particular as regards the ownership of the pledges offered. I advisedly say assumed notion, because it is nothing more than an assumption, as I will show by-and-by. Therefore, before the borrower can get his money, he in any case must prove his identity by some document or other, even if the pledge be under fifteen francs; if it exceed that sum, he must bring the receipt for the rent of his dwelling, or his license as a tradesman, or his card showing that he is an elector, or I do not know what. Should the document he is called upon to produce contain the least flaw, both the money for the pledge, and the pledge itself are impounded until he brings with him two householders who vouch for his respectability, and who must bring the vouchers for their own. It is only after all these formalities have

been satisfactorily terminated that he receives his ticket and the price of his pledge, but not before the whole of the transaction has been recorded in an enormous register, etc.

When he wishes to redeem his chattel, he must deposit his ticket and the money twenty-four hours beforehand, that is, if the article has been pledged at a branch office. He can, of course, go to the central office and obtain possession of his property on the same day, but the loss of time involved in such a step is considerable. It means waiting at least three or four hours, for the place is generally crammed.

All these precautions would convey the idea that dishonesty is specially guarded against, that under the circumstances it becomes impossible to pledge stolen property. One or two stories will prove the contrary.

Some ten years and a half ago, a jeweller's shop in the Rue des Saussaies was broken into, and the whole of the stock abstracted. It found its way almost bodily to the State pawnshop, which advanced about thirty-five thousand francs upon it. The police, who were informed to that effect, naturally communicated with the pawnshop, which professed to know nothing of the matter. The affair was apparently at an end, for the pawnshop, being a State institution, claimed inferentially to be above suspicion. The real owner of the stolen property refused, though, to take "No" for an answer, and by dint of inquiring he managed to prove that the pawnshop was actually in possession of the goods. There was no gainsaying the thing, for the

gold and silver, of which the property consisted, had particular marks. The State pawnshop had lent the money on the borrower's producing a document proving his identity, but which proved at the same time that he was under the supervision of the police. The State pawnshop refused to restore the goods, proceedings were instituted, and le Mont de Piété was worsted. Another story dates from the Second Empire. A lady, well known in the salons of the Tuileries at that time, patronized pretty nearly every jeweller in Paris. Her status in society enabled her to get as much credit as she liked. No sooner were the goods bought than they were pledged, and at last, when credit became exhausted, and tradesmen claimed their money, while offering to take back their goods instead, it was found that every atom of these had been lodged with "ma tante." The Emperor, in order to prevent a scandal, interfered, and paid the money.

This is the system which some of our county councillors and a few writers in periodicals would like to see transplanted among us; and these the serious inconveniences which I have endeavoured to point out. But there are also amusing sides to the affair, not the least comic of which, perhaps, are the open-air tailoring shops connected with the headquarters of "the paternal pawnshop," which headquarters are generally designated by the name of "grand clou,"—Anglice, "big nail," instead of "spout," as with us.

"Big nail" is decidedly a misnomer in this instance, considering that, for many years already, the authorities

of the Paris "Mont de Piété" have been too cramped for room to store wearing apparel by suspending it from the walls. It is stowed into the smallest possible compass with a sublime disregard of its appearance when redeemed; and as a consequence the workman or student's best suit, whether it be of broadcloth or tweed, looks, when he gets possession of it once more, as if it were made of the new-fashioned material women wear, and which, I believe, is called crêpon. The middle-class Frenchman is, as a rule, not very well groomed or dressed, but even he objects to wear his clothes in the condition they are returned to him by the State pawnbroker. Some three or four decades ago, a German tailor, of minor manual skill probably, but certainly possessed of inventive powers, being out of work, hit upon the idea of establishing himself under the gateway of the "Mont de Piété" in the Rue des Francs-Bourgeois, in order to repair the damage done to the garments while in durance vile. A couple of clean potato sacks on which to sit, a pressing board, a "goose," a small charcoal stove, scissors, needles and thread, and a slop basin full of water, made up the whole of his establishment. He prospered exceedingly for a twelvemonth, after which competition must have set in; for the last time I happened to be in the Rue des Francs-Bourgeois (three or four years ago), there were at least a dozen tailors established under as many gateways opposite and by the side of the "Mont de Piété," and I was told that twice as many plied their trade at the other entrance in the Rue des Blancs-

Manteaux. "I have been here for five and twenty years," said my informant, a shaggy Auvergnat; "but trade is not what it used to be. There is a rush after the workman's pay-day" (the 15th and 30th of the month), "but the students, who used to be our best customers, no longer pawn their clothes. I suppose they are growing steady and careful; worse luck for them and for us." He reminded me of that Scotch butler who regretted the days when he had to carry every one of his master's guests upstairs.

The mention of the open-air tailors' shops near the "Mont de Piété" has incidentally reminded me of some of the al fresco industries of Paris. I will treat of these in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

Some curious industries—The commissionnaire—What he can do, what he cannot do—The commissionnaire as a shoeblack—The commissionnaire as an aid to the police in an historical crime—The wool-carder—French and English bedding—Street cries—The professor—An interview with him—A page on the water supply of Paris in the past and in the present—The mender of taps and cisterns—The history of a great commercial genius—Bread crusts—A varnish for poultry—Stewed rabbit—Raspings.

At the first blush Paris seems to offer fewer facilities than London to the nondescripts of all ages who, nondescripts though they be, aim at earning an honest living. There is scarcely a nook or corner within our own four-mile radius where a man may not get his boots brushed and blacked at any hour between sunrise and sunset, thanks to the laudable efforts of those who have made the "Shoeblack Brigade" a twice-blessed institution. Within my recollection, which extends over many years, I have never seen a boy shoeblack in Paris. Away from the main thoroughfares and its principal side streets, the *décrotteur* is simply a phenomenon, and he is rarely, if ever, under forty. He is not there to black shoes, his chief business is to run on errands and carry parcels, large or small. One may

implicitly trust him with any amount of money or valuables, for he is licensed by the Prefecture of Police; his credentials to that effect are suspended from a button of his corduroy jacket in the shape of a brass badge, or fastened round his arm on a leather strap. In nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand he is an Auvergnat, and looks it. The sturdy, well-knit frame seems capable of any amount of fatigue; distances seem to have no terror for him, and he will carry out your business faithfully, and in an incredibly short time, provided you give him minute instructions. It will not do to leave anything to his personal, unaided intelligence. If you do, you may reckon, in the event of the affair requiring any initiative on his part, that he will come back *bredouille*—*Anglicé*, without result. Your remarks about his want of ingenuity will be met with a:—"Dame, monsieur, it fallait me le dire," uttered neither in sorrow nor in anger, for, unlike the more mercurial Parisian, or mere inhabitant of Paris, the Auvergnat commissionnaire does not pretend to make up by voluble speech for slowness of intellect. He is a man of few words, and, I should say, of no thought. He sits peacefully on his blacking-box, a contrivance not unlike a small dog-kennel, with a flattened, zinc-covered top, and his "porter's knot," an equally curious arrangement, resting against the lamp-post behind him, while the surging tide of vociferating, sibilant humanity dashes past him. Or else he is to be found at the shop of the marchand-de-vin, in the farthest and darkest corner. Unlike

his young London analogue, he never offers you his services by word or sign, and if you should claim his services to make your lower extremities presentable, he will set about the business in the most leisurely manner. The outcome of his ministrations is never very brilliant; on the other hand, by the time your shoeleather is presentable again, you will have received a lesson in the art of contortion which will stand you in excellent stead as a performer in tableaux vivants, or as a painter's model, for the top of the box, on which your left and right feet have in turn been placed, is at least eighteen inches from the ground, and, as I have already observed, the Paris décrotteur does not hurry himself.

Nevertheless, our Auvergnat friend, in addition to being an absolutely inoffensive member of the nondescript class, has often proved a useful one. Canler, one of the half-dozen detectives of genius France has seen during this century, by preference applied to him when his other sources of information failed. Canler, however, was possessed of a faculty which the majority of his successors, even the most eminent, seemed to lack. He succeeded in making this "human beast of burden"—for the commissionnaire-décrotteur is in reality nothing more—talk.

After the attempt, in 1835, on Louis-Philippe's life by Fieschi, the latter was apprehended almost immediately. All the efforts of the Paris police to find the traces of his accomplices proved fruitless. The police knew whom they wanted, they had a minute description of Fieschi's henchmen; they felt certain that the latter

could not have left the capital, every issue from which was carefully watched; they even suspected them to be in hiding at Nina Lassave's, Fieschi's new mistress, but they had not the faintest clue as to the whereabouts of the girl herself. Canler concluded that the infernal machine could only have been put together within the walls of the city; because the risk of importing it in its integral shape through one of the barriers, and of attracting the attention of the excise officers, would have been too great; consequently, that the barrels of which it was composed must have been brought from the manufacturer's, or from the residence of the individual who had supplied them, to the spot where the machine had been completed, and that in all probability a commissionnaire had been charged with their transport. Nothing was easier than to summon the commissionnaires to the Prefecture of Police, and this was finally done. Canler interrogated every one of them personally, and, by dint of benevolent—as distinct from spiteful—cross-examination, elicited the information from the commissionnaire Dubronet—who, for a wonder, happened to be a native of Picardy—that he, Dubronet, had carried to a house in a street near the Hôtel de Ville, a trunk which seemed by far too heavy for its size, and which, notwithstanding the bearer's strength, had proved almost too much for him. More than that Dubronet could not recollect. His mind was an absolute blank with regard to the situation of the house whence he had taken the trunk. It was not in his own neighbourhood, nor anywhere near it. On his way back from a long errand,

he had been accosted by a stranger who took him to the house where the trunk was waiting, and afterwards accompanied him through the streets of Paris to its destination. Dubronet had noticed the Hôtel de Ville on his way, but more than that he could not say. In those days, the Hôtel de Ville quarter was a congeries of narrow, ill-smelling streets, resembling one another, amidst which any one not endowed with an extraordinary "bump of locality" might easily lose himself; it was, therefore, not surprising that the honest, but by no means bright, Picard should fail to remember the exact spot.

Under the circumstances, Canler decided to send Dubronet, in the company of two detective officers, to explore the maze into which he had carried the trunk. Two days were spent in fruitless search. The detectives' oft-repeated question: "Do you think this is the spot?" invariably elicited the same reply: "No, I do not think it was here;" and finally the three returned to the Prefecture of Police to confess themselves baffled. But Canler refused to be baulked in that way, and the trio recommenced their perambulations under his own supervision. When they got to the angle of the Quai de la Grève and the Rue du Long-Pont, Canler asked his inspectors if they had explored the latter thoroughfare. "Yes, several times;" was the answer; and they continued their tour of inspection without the slightest result. All at once, Canler endeavoured to transmit to Dubronet's brain a small modicum of his, Canler's, powers of observation. By that time they had returned

to their starting point, the angle of the Quai de la Grève and the Rue du Long-Pont, facing the end of which street stood the church of St. Gervais. "Did you notice a church in the street whither you took the trunk?" he asked Dubronet. "No, monsieur;" was the answer. "At any rate, I don't remember." After that, Canler considered all further efforts in company of the commissionnaire a waste of time, and gave orders to take him to the nearest police-station, where he would join him presently. The way to the station lay through the Rue du Long-Pont, and scarcely had the trio proceeded a couple of dozen yards on their way before one of the inspectors returned. Dubronet had recognized the house bearing the number 11 as that in which he had deposited the trunk. Canler's mention of the church had been, as it were, the small spark which set light to Dubronet's almost uninflammable intelligence, and Fieschi, when confronted with Nina Lassave, who, for reasons which it is not necessary to mention here, detested him, found it impossible to deny his main share in the crime.

This is only one of the many instances in which the commissionnaire-décrotteur has proved a valuable aid in the hunting down of malefactors; so, after all, his mental denseness may be forgiven for the sake of the services he has rendered to society. For it should be borne in mind that, although the Prefecture of Police receives each morning numberless anonymous communications purporting to supply information with regard to hitherto undiscovered crimes, that information is rarely, if ever, of any practical value. It generally

emanates from "cranks," or from individuals who are prompted by private revenge. When, however, it becomes a question of assisting the police effectually, Frenchmen in general, and Parisians in particular, are by no means eager to do so. Their reluctance springs from two causes, which I may have occasion to point out one day. At present I wish to return to the subject with which I started this chapter—namely, the industries carried on in the streets, and especially such industries as have not their counterparts in the streets of London.

One of the foremost of these is that of the wool-carder—I am not at all certain whether it is the right word to use, but it will have to do, as I can find no other. The wool-carder is sometimes a man, more frequently a woman, more frequently still a man and a woman going about in couples. Until the introduction of the French spring mattress, with its woollen or horse-hair mattress on the top, the bedding of the English middle-classes, more costly perhaps than the other, left a good deal to desire both from the points of view of comfort and hygiene. As long as I can remember, the French have enjoyed something very near perfection in that respect. Whatever the shortcomings in the way of roomy washhand basins and capacious ewers may have been—and still are, to a certain extent, from one end of France to the other—the traveller could confidently reckon upon a comfortable bed on which to stretch his weary limbs. This is not always the case even now in England. I need not particularize, but the reader may feel certain that I should not have preferred such a

charge without very good grounds. I moreover doubt whether, in any but the best-regulated private houses or hotels, the bedding receives that amount of attention it receives in France. I do not mean with regard to cleanliness, but with regard to the periodical ventilation and combing of the horsehair and wool contained in the mattresses. I am under the impression that much of this neglect is due, first, to the absence of the ambulant wool-carder from our midst; secondly, to the want of accommodation in our ordinary houses for performing the work. Nothing seems easier than to send our mattresses to the bedding manufacturer's or large upholsterer's, where they were bought, to be taken to pieces and put together again, but we should have to await the upholsterer's or manufacturer's convenience to return them to us; and, with the utmost despatch, the business would take three or four days, for we should certainly not be his only customers. Meanwhile our beds would be dismantled, unless we had a second set of mattresses, a very improbable provision indeed. In Paris—and, for that matter, throughout the whole of France—all possible discomfort is avoided by the *cardeuse de matelas*, who comes to work at one's own house. She keeps a list of all her customers, each of whom she visits once a year, unless she is sent for in the interim after an illness of a member of the household. She performs her work in the courtyard of the house. She begins early in the morning, and at nightfall the freshly-carded and re-stuffed mattress is in its customary place. It is a very profitable business, for a couple of carders can earn,

year in year out, between fifteen and twenty francs a day.

There is one phase in connection with the street industries of Paris with which the foreign visitor, especially if he be an Englishman, rarely becomes acquainted. I am alluding to the cries themselves with which the vendors of the various commodities, or the would-be purchasers of discarded household things, announce their presence. To begin with, the English visitor generally takes up his quarters at one of the good hotels in or near the principal thoroughfares, and there in their Babel-like confusion the street cries are not heard. The sound of an isolated cry may reach his ear through the open window while he is dressing; but he scarcely pays attention to it, inasmuch as he heard a similar one at home. It is the cry of "Tonneaux, tonneaux," which resembles in its sound that of our own ambulant coal vendors. All the others are absolutely different from ours, and have remained the same throughout the lapse of years, so that the inhabitant of Paris, and especially the Parisian, never mistakes one for another. He hears them from his fifth or sixth story, and, without troubling to look out of his window to verify the auricular impression by ocular proof, he runs down his flights of stairs, confident of finding the man he wants.

I have already remarked in these pages that scarcely a third of the inhabitants of Paris are born Parisians, and that of this third not half are Parisians of the second and third generations. Consequently, it often

happens that a new-comer, embarking in this or that "street industry," is totally ignorant of the cry that appertains to it. In that case he is obliged to go and take a lesson, or a series of lessons, from a professor; for should he, or she, attempt to start a new cry, however melodious, the chances are ten to one that they would miss seven-eighths of those that would be customers. The reader must not suspect *me* of trying to mystify him; I am writing in sober earnest. Personally I have only known one of these professors, but I believe that a few years ago there were three or four. I was not aware of their existence until told of it one day by the elder brother of M. André Wormser, the musical composer of "L'Enfant Prodigue," who (the brother) lived in the same house with me. We were standing talking at the front door when a vendor of "sheep's trotters" went by, crying his wares as he went. To any one endowed with the faintest ear for music there was no mistaking the cry: it sounded exactly like the opening notes of "Dinorah's" shadow-song (*Le Pardon de Ploermel*). I had heard the cry since I was a lad, and the opera itself is scarcely less familiar to me; but, oddly enough, I had never remarked upon its similarity until that moment—perhaps because I had never heard it uttered in the presence of any one. This time, however, I did notice it.

"You are right," replied my neighbour, "and I believe that Meyerbeer himself acknowledged his indebtedness to the cry. It's only one case out of many; but if you are at all curious in these matters, you ought to go and

pay a visit to 'the professor.' You will not only get a good deal of valuable information on that particular subject, but meet with an odd specimen of humanity (*un type*) besides."

"The professor of what?" I asked.

"The professor of street cries," was the answer; "the individual who drums all these cries into the ears of those who are unable to pick them up for themselves."

"You are jesting," I said, suspecting a practical joke on his part.

"I never play tricks upon one so evidently in earnest about his profession as you are," was the flattering rejoinder. "I will give you his address—or, at any rate, the name of the street where he lives. It is in the Rue de Flandre; the street, as you know, is very long, but his place is somewhere near the famous 'Table d'Hôte des Monstres.' Any man, woman, or child, will tell you the exact number of his house, for he is quite a celebrity."

Next day but one I made my way to the Rue de Flandre, which leads from the Boulevard de la Villette to the fortifications. I had no difficulty in finding the professor's domicile. The first woman of whom I asked (she kept a greengrocer's stall at the corner of a street) gave me the desired information.

"Le professeur de cris?" she said, repeating my question, and hesitating for a moment. "Monsieur veut dire l'individu qui apprend les gens à gueuler?* Si

* The woman ought to have said "qui enseigne;" but I would point out once for all that I am not responsible for the French of the lower—or, for that matter, of the higher—classes. I will thank my would-be critics to remember this.

monsieur veut attendre un instant, ma petite va lui montrer."

In a little while I stood in the concierge's lodge of one of those modern, barrack-like buildings which have replaced the crazy but picturesque tenements in the Rue de Flandre of old. "Au fond de la cour, monsieur, au cinquieme au-dessus de l'entresol, le numero dix-sept. Monsieur ne peut pas faire d'erreur, il entendra le violon, parce que le professeur"—the concierge also called him "le professeur"—"est en train de donner sa leçon." Provided with this information, but wondering whether my visit was opportune or not, I toiled up ten flights of stairs, and finally found myself in a long, narrow passage at the top of the house. There were eight horribly yellow doors on each side, with large, spavined, black numbers on them; at the end of the passage, facing me, was the door I wanted, marked seventeen. I did not hear the violin, as the concierge had predicted, but as I drew nearer, I caught the sound of a cracked voice, and in response the ripple of laughter from a very full-toned female voice. "Le professeur ne s'ennuie pas," I said, almost aloud, as I knocked, for it is surprising how "slangy" one becomes, in thought as well as in language, after a protracted stay in Paris. This time, however, I was mistaken: the professor was not enjoying himself at all with his pupil, as I discovered almost immediately. To my request for a few minutes' conversation after he had finished his lesson, he replied, with one of those old-fashioned bows which are gradually disappearing from French life: "Enchanté,

monsieur, de vous voir. Voulez vous me permettre de continuer avec madame?" pointing to his pupil. "Elle entre en fonction demain, et je crains fort qu'elle ne soit encore à la hauteur. Elle à la voix très belle, mais l'oreille est très dure." And turning to a black-board, on which the following phrase was "noted,"

he played it at least a score of times in succession to the buxom young woman who stood staring at him open-mouthed and open-eyed. I felt inclined to stare as hard as she did, for my neighbour had not overstated the case when he called the professor "a character." The nearest physical likeness to him I have ever seen was François Blanc, of Baden Baden and Monte Carlo fame, but François Blanc was a king compared to him, for he was washed and combed and shaven; his clothes were not in rags, though he was not a glass of fashion by any means. But the general build, the skin, the features of the two men were alike. Blanc's face looked as if it had been made of old parchment, the professor's as if it had been made of several saffron-coloured old Suède gloves, indifferently joined. Blanc's beak, for one could scarcely call it a nose, was ornamented with a pair of spectacles, which by some peculiar play of the muscles he could move up and down at will; the professor's was similarly adorned, but the glasses were

green and the beak crimson, literally crimson, like a strawberry, and not unlike it in texture; an extraordinary consumption of "petit bleu" was writ large on it. The eyes were deep-set, with enormous black rings round them. Like François Blanc, the professor did not appear to walk; he sidled, the head, with its scanty beard and its scantier hair, almost disappearing between the drawn-up shoulders. His clothes hung upon him as upon a clothes-prop, and yet the slightest movement on his part made one apprehensive of their coming to pieces, for they had been worn to the last thread, and their cohesion seemed almost entirely due to the grease with which they were coated. The hat, which was lying on the bed, bore a monumental aspect—that of a monument in ruins—and though more than twelve years have passed since I caught a glimpse of it, I never see the caricature of Lord John Russell in *Vanity Fair* without being reminded of that couvre-chef.

Nevertheless, while he is playing, the man becomes temporarily transformed. The combination of crimson and green on the face reminds one of the shifting railway signal on a bright summer's night; the sordidness of his dress disappears; for the moment he impresses one as would a Julien, an Offenbach, a Musard, or a Strauss, for he handles his instrument with supreme grace and contagious enthusiasm, interrupting himself now and again to convey by his voice what he thinks his violin fails to convey, and wielding his bow as if conducting an orchestra of a hundred performers. And all this to the utter astonishment of the buxom pupil, who continues

to stare at him, until brought to herself by his "À votre tour, madame."

He might as well have played to a blinking owl in a church tower. The woman has not the faintest notion of time or tune; she simply shouts with all the force of her very strong lungs, and when the professor tells her that she is half a tone flat, she shouts louder still, inhaling deep draughts of such air as the room affords, and ejecting the sound with the force of a large pair of bellows. In vain does the teacher repeat the phrase on his instrument, in vain does he endeavour to guide her stentorian voice with his chirp—for it is nothing more—his reward is a peal of laughter that makes the window-panes rattle in their frames—the peal of laughter I have already heard from the other side of the door, the peal of laughter which neither the late Augustine Brohan, nor her niece, the late Jane Samary, clever as they were, could have imitated in their impersonations of the servants in Molière's comedies.

But the professor does not lose heart; his patience seems marvellous, and when, half an hour later, the woman takes her departure, the cry she emits bears some faint resemblance to the phrase noted on the black-board. Then, with another courtly bow, the little man turns to me, thanking me for *my patience*, and asks the object of my call. When I tell him he is delighted, and offers to give me all the information possible. He begins by showing me his small collection of manuscripts and printed pamphlets, all bearing on the subject in question, and allows me to transcribe their titles. There is (1)

A copy, taken at the Bibliothèque Nationale, of an order, dated 1258, by which Etienne Emilion, prévôt of Paris —a thirteenth century mayor—regulates the hours of crying in the public streets, and the dues payable by the criers to the city of Paris. (2) A copy, also taken at the Bibliothèque Nationale, of a manuscript pamphlet by Guillaume de Villeneuve, a chronicler of the fourteenth century, containing the various cries of his time.* (3) A tiny volume, one of the earliest specimens of printing, entitled, "Cris de Paris sous François I.," by Jennequin.

The professor was kind enough to let me look through these little books, and to play some of the cries on his violin. Though I am not a musician in the technical sense of the word, I have a very good ear, and I immediately recognized every one. One of these, however, is no longer a cry nowadays; it is played on an instrument, a curious instrument, a brass or pewter tap, like the mouthpiece of a clarionet flattened at one end. And this again brings me back to some of the strange industries exercised in the streets of Paris.

In spite of the constant boast of many Parisians about their magnificent water supply, that supply is miserably deficient both in quantity and quality. At the best of times, the kitchens in large establishments, such as

* In those days the peripatetic vendors not only cried their own wares, but the established traders employed sworn criers. The bathing establishments sent out their own servants. The mendicant friars, and what we should call at present the sisters of charity, did the crying for the institutions to which they belonged, while the Asylum for the Blind sent out its inmates in charge of a guide.

restaurants, hospitals, public institutions, etc., are provided with two taps, one supplying the water for "inward application," the other for "outward application." I may be mistaken, but I am under the impression that it is just as dangerous—perhaps a degree less, but not more—to use impure water for cleansing purposes as for drinking. This wilful blindness of the Parisian with regard to one of the most important questions affecting his health is no new thing. To go back no farther than a century and a half, I find a scholarly and enlightened gentleman, Bonnamy, the historiographer of and librarian to the city of Paris, "patting the authorities on the back," for their liberal provision in that respect. He thinks and writes "that the water of the present day (1754), compared with that of yore, is *beyond reproach*." The italics are not mine, for I happen to remember Voltaire giving the finishing touch to a picture of distress and wretchedness by showing us, à la Hogarth, a poor devil of a Parisian swilling water—and such water—from a cracked beer-mug. We may take it, however, that, in periods of exceptional drought, the poor devil of a Parisian was glad to get potable water even from a cracked beer-mug, inasmuch as in normal days the quantity of water, potable and otherwise, from the wells, fountains, and various concessions was limited to three pints per day for each inhabitant. Of course, there were numberless water-carriers perambulating the city in all directions, and selling as much water as one liked to buy at two *sols* the load (two pails, containing thirty-six pints), but that fluid, if fluid it could be

named, was taken indiscriminately from the Seine, and from the "condemned" wells, and what the latter meant in those days is too dreadful to contemplate. Yet, odd to relate, the Parisian appears to have had a particular liking for the commodity, and to have preferred it to any other. And let not the reader imagine that I am alluding to the ignorant, careless, and unthinking citizen, eager to slake his thirst, regardless of consequences; I am alluding to men whose names are written in golden letters in the history of France as benefactors to their fellow-men; I am alluding to Parmentier, who introduced the potato into France, to Louis Charles Petit-Radel, a member of the Institute, to Mirabeau-Tonnerre, who seems to have had this much in common with his younger brother, Mirabeau-Tonneau, that he would have nothing to do with water for himself. All these, and a good many of lesser fame, deliberately set their faces against any and every improvement in the water supply of Paris, and their arguments, which have been preserved in the "Transactions" of the Académie des Sciences, are irresistibly comic. When Antoine Deparcieux, the well-known mathematician, who, even at that time, was a great authority on hydrostatics, proposed to give the Parisians the water they seemed to need so much, Parmentier raised all kinds of objections, ostensibly on the score of expense, in reality because he was anxious to break a lance in honour of the Seine. He waxes positively indignant at the aspersions cast upon the purity of the stream. "Ingratitude, that vice which unfortunately is becoming too

common, does not even spare food and drink," he writes. "Though a lengthened experience has given a daily verdict for many centuries in favour of the wholesomeness of the water of the Seine; though this river has the inestimable privilege of flowing through one of the greatest and smiling cities of Europe; though it provides the dwellers in that city with water eminently fit to quench their thirst in the most pleasant manner, *without hurt or inconvenience to the digestion of that multitude of human beings, among whom there are some occupying the foremost rank in science and literature, without hurt or inconvenience to the complexion and freshness of the prettiest and most amiable of women who use that water in numberless ways; yet, in spite of all these constant advantages,* the water of the Seine has not been able to escape the malicious shafts of wickedness and *calumny.* Perhaps even those who owe to it their appetite, their flesh-making qualities, and their vigorous constitution, are this day among its most fearless enemies." And he caps his defence of the much-abused river by a still stronger argument. "Suppose," he says, "that a dead dog, in a state of decomposition, be flung into the river, *the water taken at three or four inches distance from the animal, whether in front, behind, or at the sides, will certainly not be the worse for it.*" When the brothers Perrier, the famous engineers, proposed the then newly-introduced steam pump to purify and raise the water of the Seine, the proposal led to a far from courteous controversy between Beaumarchais and Mirabeau. The great tribune declared himself absolutely

hostile to the enterprise, "though," as M. Belgrand said, "he had not the faintest knowledge of the subject."

More surprising is it to find a man of Radel's scientific attainments opposing all improvements in that direction. He was not only an eminent member of the Catholic hierarchy, but one of three brothers, all of whom had devoted their lives to archæological, architectural, and scientific pursuits; he himself was the author of a well-known treatise on "The Aqueducts of the Ancients," which treatise was evidently composed with the idea of paving the way for the utilization of the water of the river Ourcq, a scheme afterwards carried out and to which the Parisians really owe part of the pure water they have, the rest being conveyed from the Dhuys. Well, Radel appears to contemplate with a kind of horror the prospect of a superfluity of water in every household, "lest it should lead to such a multiplicity of baths that their use will descend to classes which at the present moment are the least concerned with such refinement." And then, in order to give some quasi-philosophical reason for this extraordinary, specious plea, he goes on—"It is worthy of remark that the establishment of the public baths at Rome coincides with the development in her midst of the first germs of *the decadence which was* introduced by Asiatic luxuriousness."

Nevertheless, about the year 1770, an association, entitled "La Compagnie Dufaud," had erected, close to the Arsenal,* a hydraulic apparatus for supplying with

* There remains nothing of the Arsenal but the powder room and the library.

comparatively wholesome and filtered water those who had no taste for the muddy fluid provided by the corporation. Their carters wore a distinctive dress and a brass badge on their caps. The drivers of the vehicles which were shaped like a barrel and painted yellow, with the royal arms and those of the city on it, were provided with a trumpet with which they beguiled the weariness of their journey and warned would-be customers of their advent. Unfortunately, the frequent use of the instrument was not always relished by the animal between the shafts, which, after all, bore very little likeness to the war-horse of the Bible, and frequently upset the whole concern rather than be "trumpeted-at" the livelong day. The carters of the Dufaud Company abandoned their trumpets, but the vendors of the taps and menders of these small water-cisterns, which have by no means vanished from the households living in the less modern buildings, possessed themselves of the instruments, and the old-fashioned cry of "R-r-racommodeur de fontaines, poseur de robinets," which was noted in one of the professor's little volumes, disappeared wholly for a good many years and the equally old-fashioned cry,

> "Qui veut de l'eau? À chacun duict.
> C'est un des quatre élémens,"

was revived, to disappear in its turn finally as the century advanced, and the supply of more or less wholesome water increased.

Personally, I do not remember the vendors of taps and menders of cisterns playing their trumpets. They

were forbidden to do so five years before I came to Paris. But, inasmuch as the cry had fallen entirely into oblivion, and as they wisely considered that, if resumed, it would fail to convey aught to the servant or housewife in need of their services, they flattened one of their taps at the straight end, and made a quasi-musical instrument of it, which they use to this day. For, if the reader be at all observant, he will not have failed to notice in his perambulations through Paris that certain houses, generally the most modern, bear small blue and white enamelled plates which are absent from the others. The plate conveys the information that "water and gas are laid-on on every floor." These plates serve a two-fold purpose; they facilitate the business of the employés of the gas and water companies; they save the time and temper of the concierge in answering would-be tenants who would make such provision the first condition of their tenancy. In the houses where the water is not laid-on on every floor—and there are still a great many—the tenants are perforce obliged to store it in some way, for they cannot descend six or seven flights of stairs each time they require a drop of water. It is for these that the ambulant cistern-mender and vendor of taps caters; it is on their account that his tootling is still heard in the streets of Paris, the only capital in Europe, as far as I know, where that sound still rings in the air.

The commissionnaire, the water-carrier, and the menders of cisterns are, after all, nearly as old as the city itself. Their industries sprang from no thought of

theirs, but were virtually created for them without the least initiative on their part. My reason for dwelling at some length on their occupations was the strange and unfamiliar points connected with them. But there are street industries in Paris which owe their origin to the ingenious thought—often a single ingenious thought —of some man or woman in humble life whose reward for that moment of inspiration was a modest competency, and not infrequently a considerable fortune. One of these men, le père Chapelier, has been the founder of an industry which, in its various ramifications, yields thousands of pounds every year. To myself and the old-fashioned, studious journalists of the last four or five decades his history is well known; to the younger generation of Paris journalists it has become a legend in which they believe more or less; to English and American readers in general the following facts, which Mr. Smiles would not have disowned for his remarkable book on "Self Help," will prove absolutely new:—

After Waterloo, young Chapelier found himself positively penniless. He was twenty-five, and had been taken from the plough at eighteen. Seven years soldiering had made him very smart to look at; he could handle his musket and sword with the best, but beyond that he knew nothing. That which he did know was of no use whatsoever to him in times of peace. Of course, like a great many soldiers of the "Grande Armée," he felt reluctant to return to the plough, whence he originally came, and he made his way to Paris, to swell the number of nondescripts. He

became *a ravageur*—read "mudraker," for though it is not the English equivalent for the French word, it is the only English term for the occupation Chapelier took up. In those days the gutter ran in the middle of the Paris streets, and the raker stood raking it from morn till night for old nails, old iron and brass, carried towards him by the sluggish current. The proceeds, as may be imagined, were not princely, but Chapelier managed to keep the wolf from the door by holding horses and opening carriages at night, and providing a plank whereon to cross his ditch—for the gutter was nothing less, when the rain had swollen it to uncomfortable dimensions, especially to the pedestrians of the fairer sex. He was the Parisian counterpart of the London crossing-sweeper.

Chapelier, though of humble origin, was, nevertheless, proud in his own way, and having on several occasions come in contact with some of his former comrades while engaged in his threefold occupation, he felt more or less ashamed of it. In vain did he try to stifle his pride with the well-known French axiom, that "there is no such a thing as a foolish trade, provided the man who exercises it be not a fool;" he felt ashamed for all that, and finally entered the service of a wholesale rag merchant as a sorter. His earnings were scarcely more satisfactory than before, but he had minimized the risk of meeting his old acquaintances and the moral man was satisfied. Unfortunately—or fortunately, as the sequel will show—the physical man revolted. Close confinement for many hours each day in an atmosphere

compared with which that of the dissecting-room is as the spice-laden breezes of the East; used, moreover, from his earliest infancy, to a vigorous, active life in the open air, Chapelier's health became impaired, and at the end of six months he found himself stretched on a bed of sickness in a hospital. While there he made the acquaintance of an individual who followed the occupation of artificially fattening poultry and pigeons. The same kind of thing is still practised in several parts of France, though it has often been asserted that the authorities have put a stop to it. The method is almost as cruel as that of fattening geese, which is practised principally in Strasburg and Metz. The *gaveur*—literally "crammer"—fills his mouth with corn or peas, then forcibly opens the bill of the fowl or pigeon and blows the contents of his own into that of the unhappy animal. I have been told that it requires a great deal of skill; but for all that, Chapelier, who was introduced by his hospital acquaintance to a poultry farmer, only managed to earn two francs per day at it. He felt thoroughly dissatisfied with his lot in life, but instead of spending his time in vain regrets and impotent recrimination against the rapacity of his employer, which appears to be the latest mode of trying to right things, he kept his eyes wide open for some opportunity to strike out a new path.

He had not long to wait. He soon discovered that the poultry dealers who did not happen to get rid of their wares on the first day of exposure for sale, were compelled to reduce their prices by twenty or thirty per cent. for each day's delay, so that in the end those

wares had to be sold at an enormous loss, albeit that they looked as fresh and toothsome as on their arrival in the market—at any rate to the unexperienced—for the knowing housewife or cook was not deceived by their appearance. Chapelier was too clever to ask the dealers themselves the secret of this phenomenal astuteness on the part of their customers; they would probably have refused to enlighten him. "Better by far," he thought, "to pay court to some obscure *cordon bleu*—the uglier the better—and make her talk." Chapelier was by no means ill-favoured, and in a few days he was on most cordial terms with a Vatel in petticoats ministering to the inner comforts of an aristocratic family in the Faubourg St. Germain. From her he learnt that the hard, smooth, and brilliant surface noticeable on the legs of poultry in general, and of turkeys in particular, becomes dull and cracked within four-and-twenty hours of their being killed, and disappears altogether after forty-eight hours.

That was enough for Chapelier. In a very little while he concocted a varnish which, when applied to such legs, imposed upon the most knowing. He levied a percentage from the dealers on the loss thus averted, but the supervision he had to exercise in order not to be cheated himself was too irksome to him, and after three or four months he sold the recipe of his varnish to a friend for one thousand francs. Chapelier had saved money besides, and was now looking out for a business "with a roof to it." He offered his former employer (the rag merchant) to become his partner, but the couple of thousand francs

Chapelier could dispose of were not deemed sufficient by that individual, who said that nothing less than fifty thousand francs would do. If at that moment the rag merchant had possessed the gift of reading the future, he would have taken his former "hand" into partnership without a red cent., for Chapelier died worth half a million sterling, the foundation of which fortune was laid at the time of the interview. It was early morning, and the rag-gatherers were trooping in with the flotsam and jetsam of the great city they had collected over night. As usual, there were numberless crusts of bread, and Chapelier conceived the idea there and then of setting up in business as a "second-hand baker," or, to speak by the card, as a dealer in second-hand bread. The reader need not smile incredulously, I am simply relating an incident that led to the making of one very large and several minor fortunes, I am telling him the origin of a business which, with various modifications and several ramifications, exists in Paris up to the present day, though not to the extent it did formerly. The reader must bear in mind that this happened before the introduction of specially-prepared foods for poultry, pigeons, dogs, etc., etc., when bread was used in very large quantities by poultry farmers, and especially by rabbit-breeders, with whom the suburbs of Paris swarmed, and one of whom, a M. Maldant, retired on an income of £200 per annum, made in that industry alone. There are more ways of making money by stock-keeping than are dreamt of by the English farmer, and the rearing of rabbits is one.

"Gibelotte de lapin" (stewed rabbit) is a favourite dish with the Parisians of the middle and lower classes, and although that jovial old savant, Babinet,* averred that "the gibelotte de lapin of the restaurateur in the suburbs is generally made of 'puss,' unless it is made of rat," the consumption of "bunnies" in the department of the Seine is very large—so large, in fact, that the purchase of rabbit-skins is an occupation by itself. Strange to relate, the peripatetic purchaser seldom fails to ask for the head of the deceased animal. One day my concierge, in answer to my remarks about that almost stereotyped request, said, "Ma foi, monsieur, I don't know exactly why they do ask, but I fancy they sell those heads to the traiteurs at the barrières, who put them in the dish with the matou they serve you up as rabbit." Her answer reminded me of Babinet, whose lectures I used to attend when I was a young man.

To return to Chapelier. The episode of the varnish has shown us his talent for converting two and two into five, and no sooner had he caught sight of the numberless crusts of bread than the whole of the business connected with the feeding of poultry and rabbits took shape in his mind. He made no second attempt to enter into business with his former employer; he left there and then. Five or six hours later he had purchased a pony and cart; an hour or so after that he had rented a very large room in one of the deserted colleges of the Quartier Latin. Next day he paid visits to the scullions

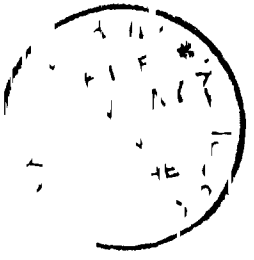
* Jacques Babinet, who did more for the popularizing of science in France than any one before him.

of all the scholastic establishments in the 12th Arrondissement, of whom he farmed all the stale bread they had been in the habit of flinging away or giving to the rag-gatherers. The scullions looked upon him as half a madman, but it did not prevent them from accepting money for what they had only been too pleased to get rid of for nothing. Encouraged by this startling and immediate success, he made similar arrangements with the scullions of all the large restaurants, and in less than a week practically secured the monopoly of all the crusts and stale bread in the capital.

Meanwhile, Chapelier had not been idle in the opposite direction. On the third morning after his interview with his former employer, he made his appearance in the Central Market—the Central Market of Madame Angot fame, not the present one—with a number of tightly-filled bags and empty, oblong baskets. Over his head was displayed a large placard: "Bread Crusts, six sous per basket." The price, per quantity, was considerably cheaper than that of mere commissariat bread; hence, Chapelier drove a roaring trade at once. In less than three months he had half a dozen carts perambulating Paris in all directions to collect his wares, and was in a fair way of making his fortune. But he was not satisfied then. In his constant intercourse with cooks, charcutiers—what we call ham and beef shops, though our ham and beef shop differs materially from the Paris one—he noticed that all these used a great quantity of *chapelure*—grated bread, raspings (I doubt whether there is an exact word for it in English)—in the

preparing of their cutlets and hams, etc., etc. Chapelier began to divide his bread-crusts into two categories: the indifferent kind for the animals, the better kind to be converted into *chapelure*. For that purpose he built two ovens; he afterwards added a factory of "pulled" bread and crusts for the soups; the charred particles of all this bread being finally converted into tooth-powder.

And here I must necessarily conclude my chapter on the curious industries of Paris. It is very incomplete, but I might fill a whole volume with the subject, and the volume would be as incomplete as the chapter.



CHAPTER XIV.

The manufacture of street arabs—A short preamble—The resources of the London street arab and those of the Paris one—The manufacturing of little angels—The Assistance Publique and illegitimate children—A trial for baby-farming—The French nurse—Whence she springs—Maternity a profitable speculation on her part—Some personal experiences.

A FEW years ago I witnessed a curious incident in the Place du Carrousel. An individual, his right arm wrapped in dirty rags, with scarcely any clothes on him, was cowering in a corner. By his side stood two children, who said nothing. He himself was soliciting the charity of the passers-by. The two little ones, according to his statement, were but half, or rather two-fifths, of his family, for there were two others of a tender age ill at home, while his wife had just been confined of a fifth. He had not been able to obtain work for weeks. In spite of his appeals, the money came but very slowly, for the Parisians, though gullible and charitable enough, have been deceived so often that they are becoming very wary, and, truth to tell, the man's appearance inspired but little belief. It was not that he was dirty and unkempt, but there was a hang-dog look about him which told as plainly as possible that he was a cheat.

The Place du Carrousel leads from the Rue de Rivoli to the waterside. I had some business across the Seine, and on my way thither had noticed the fellow; I had even given him a halfpenny, though perfectly certain that even this small donation was misplaced. On my return there was a great crowd round the spot; the man had disappeared, the children were still there. A young and elegantly dressed woman was wringing her hands in despair. Struck with pity at his woe-begone appearance, and, above all, with the wretchedness of the poor babes, she had entered into conversation with the man. He had told her his story, and given her an address, because she promised to bring some clothes for the new-born babe. Unfortunately, she wished to give him something there and then, and, in order to do so, took her purse, full of gold and bank-notes, from her pocket. In the twinkling of an eye the purse was snatched from her hands, and before she had time to recover from her surprise the thief had disappeared, leaving the two children behind him. It was just at that moment that I reached the spot. The purse contained about a thousand francs.

Now comes the curious part of the story. The two little ones declared that they did not know the man. He had, according to them, taken them away from the Jardin des Plantes, where they were playing. They had never seen him before. When conveyed to the police station, they maintained their story; they gave the address of their parents. Inquiries were made, and when a few hours later I called, the Commissary told

me that virtually they had spoken the truth. The parents had been very anxious about their lost offspring, and on the point of applying to the police themselves, when the little ones were restored to them, to their great and apparent joy. "But," added the Commissary, "I should not be surprised if the parents, if parents they are, know something more of this man. At any rate, we'll have them watched." The thing recurred to me when I sat down to write about the Paris street arab, whom the novelist is so fond of introducing into his sketches. He would prefer the London street arab to his native product, because the guttersnipe from the banks of the Thames is more picturesque than the one from the Seine. The little crossing-sweeper, the ragamuffin who turns a somersault or Catherine wheel in front of an omnibus, offers a surer reward to his descriptive powers. But though less attractive to limn, Gavroche is as great a blot on modern civilization as "Jo." In order to prove this, I must give the genesis of Gavroche.

The French equivalent for the English term "baby-farming" is "manufacturing little angels." The euphemism is pretty, especially when we consider that it conveys something much more revolting than the unvarnished home term. Baby-farming, even if practised to the most cruel extent, still leaves the helpless mite a chance of its life: the manufacturing of little angels does not admit of such a compromise; there is no double meaning attached to it; it signifies the killing of infants by some means or other. Ten years ago a woman was tried who had made away with no less than ninety

babies in twelve months. The jury found extenuating circumstances—or, rather, the Public Prosecutor failed to obtain a conviction; there was not sufficient proof against the hag: in one word, there was nothing to show that these fourscore and ten innocents had not died from natural causes; consequently their executioner was acquitted. The hundred all but ten mothers, who were in court, constituted but a small part of those who had entrusted their offspring to this human fiend in petticoats. There were about 250 more mothers who had taken the babes away at the first notice of their being ill, and in that way snatched them from the gaping jaws of death, as it were.

The tale is a curious one, and so, perhaps, I may be allowed to dwell for a moment upon it. Every one of those babes was illegitimate. The girl-mothers applied for outdoor relief to the "Assistance Publique," which invariably grants between twenty-five and thirty francs per month for the support of each child. Morality may object; humanity can but applaud the measure: to say nothing of the sociological aspect of the question in a country whose population is, if not decreasing, at least stationary. At any rate, the "Assistance Publique" not only gives the money, but gives it in advance. This the manufacturer of little angels knew, and she posted herself at the doors of the different *mairies*, and offered the mothers to take the children off their hands at the regulation price of the outdoor-relief department. The offer was invariably accepted, first of all because the price was

low; secondly, because those mothers were in situations or went out to work—in both cases the child was an incumbrance. There is no doubt that most of these poor girls acted in good faith; besides, the woman produced testimonials which allayed all suspicion, if suspicion there existed. Seeing that not five out of every hundred French mothers, and especially Parisian ones, nurse their own children, even if born in the holiest of wedlock, there was nothing very extraordinary in the arrangement. Certain is it that the manufacturer of angels managed to pick up the living material for such at about the rate of one a day for twelve months, and to become possessed of a sum little short of ten thousand francs wherewith to keep the manufactory in working order. The great secret of the success of the undertaking was to prevent the premises from becoming crowded with live stock. Not that the process of converting chubby, rosy, crowing little imps into stiff, stark, pale little angels need have been a lengthy one, if the patentee had dared to exercise her ingenuity to the full, but she was somewhat afraid of the periodical visits of the inspectors of factories of little angels who exist, and are paid by the State—mainly it would seem, to watch that the intermediate stages of transformation are properly carried out; for, in the case under discussion, the lady inspectors testified that they saw nothing unusual in the establishment in question. It was clean and healthy; the tiny population was well cared for. What more was wanted? Nor need we suspect those Government officials of having wilfully

closed their eyes to abuses; but the invention was kept so beautifully secret, that, unless they had been told of it, as they were later on, the Government inspectresses could not have discovered it.

Still, it was simple in the extreme. About a week after the arrival of the embryo angel, its mother received a letter telling her that the child was very ill. Six times out of ten the poor girl rushed down and took the child away. Though it had been there only the fourth part of a month, the money was not returned. If restitution was claimed at all, which was not often the case, compliance with the request was refused on the plea that the remainder of the month's board had been spent in physic and doctors' fees. As a rule, there was as yet little the matter with the babe; the mother was glad enough to get it back, and in a few days it recovered. But when the mother remained deaf to the appeal, or merely answered it by letter, saying that her occupation prevented her from coming down in the country—for the manufactory was not established in town,—the poor child's hours were numbered. In four and twenty or forty-eight hours it was converted into a little angel. After all, the manufacturer was rendering the mother a service. The child was illegitimate, it would be a drag upon her all her life. So the process was not entirely devoid of a kind of rough-and-ready philanthropy—from the hag's point of view, at any rate. Criminal, revolting, inhuman as was the whole business, the principal sufferer, the little angel, had perhaps the best of it, all things considered. I should not be

surprised, if the reader, after reading all I have to say upon the subject, were to come to my conclusion. The killing of babies, their conversion into little angels, was dreadful, I grant—perhaps not more dreadful, from a social and humane point of view, than their conversion into thieves, murderers, footpads, and scourges of their fellow-creatures.

One might walk from one end of Paris to the other and not meet with anything approaching the figure with which Londoners are familiar. The little urchin, with a pair of trousers that originally belonged to a grown-up man, and which, by some ingenious contrivance, are made to adhere to the small waist, or are fastened across the shoulders with a piece of string; the urchin with the unkempt head and bare feet, selling matches, or wielding a stumpy broom, is conspicuous by his absence in the streets of Paris. No such resource is left to the Paris street arab. By no squatting process, such as many an old Australian might be proud of, can he become the owner of a street-crossing; nor can he sell matches, because the primary acquisition of even a small stock of that commodity would be beyond his means, provided a paternal Government were to allow the traffic in them, which it cannot, seeing that this traffic has been farmed by a gigantic stock company, which obtained that monopoly by paying part of the late war indemnity, and has renewed it since. Nor will one find anything smaller than an adult presiding over a shoeblack box. Before he can become the master of such an establishment at the fag end of a

wall, or against the soft side of a lamp-post, a visit to the Prefecture of Police is necessary, which argus-eyed institution provides him with a document with the sign-manual of the prefect. This he is to show when bidden by any and every policeman. He is also furnished with a brass ticket, which he must suspend from his button-hole. The shoeblack at the corner of the Paris street is, as we have seen, an errand messenger besides, and tacitly an auxiliary to the police, not exactly a paid one, but getting rewarded for such information as may prove valuable. Consequently, the street arab has none of the ways open to his London brother in order to earn an honest penny, and, by the greatest of all modern miracles, to keep himself honest, if he be so minded. He must beg or steal. If he were to take up some vantage coign with the former intention, the chances are a hundred to one of his being arrested before he was two hours older, unless accompanied by a man or woman, supposed to be his father or mother. But even in that case, the brass ticket just now spoken of would be necessary, though its absence might be winked at if the adult were maimed, or blind, or lame. But a child begging on its own responsibility is the exception, and not the rule in Paris. Whenever you meet with one, you may be sure that an adult is not many yards distant. Begging being out of the question, the newspaper trade being also in the hands of his elders, the street arab is perforced reduced to pilfering, first in a small way on his own account, afterwards on commission for some Fagin, who quietly sits at home, or for a gang of ruffians, who do the

bigger part of the work. The boy, generally a very small one, is taught to introduce himself by some means into the house to be rifled, and there to lie in wait till every one is gone, at which time he opens the door to his masters and accomplices. And it will be thought, perhaps, that these boys belong to the scum of the population. That is a mistake. Very often they are the children of decent parents, who are paying for their board and lodging under the impression that they are, at any rate, looked after, if not well cared for. The matter is difficult to explain in the columns of a newspaper; but I am writing for men and women, and as such, false delicacy must be dispensed with. Three-fourths of the street arabs of Paris—of the apprentices to professional thieves—are illegitimate children. And hereby hangs a tale which compels me to enter into more details before I can proceed.

The Englishman, and above all, the Englishwoman, on a flying visit to Paris, and taking his or her walks in the Champs Elysées, the Tuileries Gardens, or those of the Luxembourg, on a bright day, cannot fail to be struck with the smart appearance of the nurses—as distinguished from nursemaids,—fondly, or apparently fondly, watching or carrying their little charges, and lavishing all kinds of endearments upon them. Those nurses, in their peculiar costumes, which strongly appeal to the love of the picturesque of the Briton on his foreign travels, hide one of the greatest social cancers of France. Their beautiful lace caps, with elegantly twisted wreaths of broad and tasteful silk

ribbon round them, and the streamers of which descend almost to their heels; their ample, and often expensive cloaks and gowns; their snow-white aprons;—are the snares with which the devil himself has betrayed French womanhood to shirk systematically her most sacred duty—namely, the nursing of her offspring. Mother's milk, if the expression means anything at all, means, to me and to all reasonable persons, the milk of the mother who bore the child. Short of that, I would have the milk of some four-footed dumb creature rather than the milk of some peasant brute, coarse and ignorant in thought, brutal in her ways, and whose brutality is only held in abeyance, while she is dressed up and made a show of to testify to the vulgar purse-pride of some silly young miss, pitchforked into matrimony and motherhood without having been told their most holy significance. "Has that peasant woman, of whom you speak so contemptuously, no feelings? Does not the fact of her being a mother herself, and doing for another child what poverty prevents her, perhaps, from doing for her own, no mitigating influence upon your hard and apparently unjust appreciation of her moral and mental qualities?" There is no doubt the reader will ask me those questions, and I can honestly answer them in the negative. I state nothing from hearsay, and careful inquiry has convinced me that ninety-nine out of every hundred of those peasant girls and women brought up to Paris in order to parade by the side of the well-to-do young mother, deliberately follow a trade, and are below the brutes of the field. The fruitfulness

of the latter is in unconscious obedience to God's and Nature's laws; the fruitfulness of the former is a speculation inspired by the most sordid of motives.

There is an old French proverb that says, "A beau mentir qui vient de loin." The homely equivalent in English would be, "It is difficult to control a lie at a distance." Hence, before proceeding with my gossip about the manufacture of street arabs, I wish to substantiate a few statements I have just made, and which might seem somewhat exaggerated. I said that three-fourths of the waifs and strays of the French capital are illegitimate children. The supply of the latter, therefore, must be very large, says the reader, and he is right. During the week ending May 24, 1884, 1239 children were born in Paris, 323 out of which were illegitimate. I further warned the reader not to mistake these boys (meaning the street arabs) as belonging to the scum of the population. Monsieur Henri Rochefort, who happened to see this statement when I first made it years ago, supplied me with some information in support of it. I give it verbatim.

"Not many years ago a friend of mine, a wealthy stockbroker, took his little motherless boy, who had recently returned from the country, whither he had been sent out to nurse, for a walk. Imagine his astonishment when he felt the urchin suddenly let go hold of his hand, and saw him rush up the courtyard of a large building, where, after putting his little cap on the ground, he began to sing a then popular ballad, 'Withered Leaves.' Inquiries were

made, and the father found out that his son and heir had been let out in the daytime to a couple of wandering beggars, who taught him their business, and brought him back every evening, giving the nurse part of the receipts." Monsieur Rochefort further offered to introduce me to the gentleman in question, whose offspring had had so curious an apprenticeship.

This brings me back to the nurse, who must be dealt with from two different aspects. I will take first the one who leaves her home—save the mark!—husband, and child, to accept a situation in a family. Here, again, an instance that came under my personal notice will justify the paragraph I wrote just now to the effect that the fruitfulness of the brutes of the field is in unconscious obedience to God's and Nature's laws; the fruitfulness of the nurse a speculation, inspired by the most sordid of motives. But a few years since I paid a visit to a friend—a well-to-do engineer, who had lately had an increase in his family. As a matter of course, I was asked whether I would look at the baby. Whereupon nurse was introduced with the little stranger in her arms. I am at all times reluctant to call any of my fellow-creatures ugly. The creation of Caliban by Shakespeare has always seemed to me a questionable piece of taste, even from a poetical point. Had the author of "The Tempest" attempted to show me Sycorax by the side of her son—I would have willingly forgiven him. And yet, if Caliban's mother had existed in the flesh, she would have probably been voted worthy of figuring in a "Book of Beauty" in the birthplace of

my friend's nurse, if the latter was a specimen of the womanhood of the place. She was simply hideous. I was told that she was the mother of four children. When I expressed my surprise that there should be a man debased, brutal enough to mate with such a monster, my friend's wife met my objection with a reply which admirably shows the light in which these things are regarded by even some of the most refined women in France. "She is very ugly, uncouth, and lamentably ignorant, but, after all, it is a very good speculation for the man who married her. She has a child every two years, which enables her to nurse two. They save their money; in fact, if I am rightly informed, the man married her under the express condition of her becoming a nurse, for she is but a half-witted creature, and has had no dower. But she is very strong, and that is the principal thing I look at."

I felt it was useless to argue the matter, so I held my tongue, though I might have pointed to the speaker's two elder children, a boy and girl, whose luxurious surroundings have not saved them from being loutish, heavy, and altogether objectionable in every way. What these children would have become if the advantages of their own home had been withheld in their tenderest years it is not difficult to guess. And it is only in well-to-do households that a nurse is kept on the premises. Among the less wealthy middle classes the babe is put out when it is scarcely a week old. Of course, the choice of a foster-mother is supposed to be made with the greatest care. There are two large

institutions in Paris—one in the Quartier St. Marceau, another in the Rue St. Apolline—where a selection of she-wolves on two legs for the future Romuluses and Remuses of the delectable third French Republic, is constantly kept on hand. The nurses must show a doctor's certificate about their bodily health. The particulars of their moral, mental, and domestic qualifications the physician cannot, and does not enter into, nor can one expect it. But there is one thing the constituted authorities might prevent, viz. the taking of a half-dozen nurselings by one peasant woman, were she a very giantess. And that this is frequently done by women who are by no means endowed with a robust physique it would be idle to deny; especially when one is confronted every now and then by a brood of youngsters pigging—there is no other word for it—in styes, which the parents of the said youngsters, poor as they may be, would think unfit for their poodle dogs.

I saw some specimens once at Samois and Franconville, about thirteen miles from Paris, whither I had gone for a country walk. Apart from the defective drainage, and consequently bad smells that prevail in every country district throughout France, the avoidable filth, slovenliness, and brutish way of living are sufficient to make an English coal-heaver or navvy sick. The sloth that used to be a blot upon some villages in the Black Country must have been comfort compared to it. On the pretext of seeking a nurse for a motherless nephew, I entered no less than eight of those crazy tenements between Enghien and Franconville. There was not a

pin to choose between them, and I involuntarily thought of poor Betty Higden and her minders, so graphically and sympathetically portrayed by Dickens. I thought of her as of a Hyperion to a satyr. Three or four primitive wooden cradles along the wall, their should-be occupants crawling along the floor, the evident landmark to their little minds the four legs of a rickety table, their companion a large mongrel dog, the rest of the furniture not worth mentioning, but the whole apartment pervaded by a faint, musty smell, to dispel which the sweet summer air, coming in from the open door, struggled in vain. Only in one instance of the eight did I succeed in interviewing the mistress of the abode without waiting; in the remaining seven she was weeding in the garden, or working in the fields, the guardianship of the little ones devolving on the said cur dog, or on a little girl or boy in no way distinguished for his or her cleanliness. In the course of conversation, I elicited that the mother's milk was doled out once a day to each of her charges; the supplementary food was supplied from a feeding-bottle. Of baths and hygienic appliances of even the most primitive kind, there was not the slightest trace. I pretended to close with nearly all of those nurses, subject to certain inquiries; and thereupon I was invariably told one and the same thing: "You know, monsieur, that I require three months' money in advance. I am obliged to take this precaution, because, asking your pardon, we are never sure of our money. Yes, that is the truth; though of course I hope there is

no offence, because I do not say this for you. But out of every ten children entrusted to us in this village, there are difficulties with four after the first quarter. The parents are in arrears with the wages, and there is a great deal of bother to find them out, for they generally happen to have no address. We only know the mothers, and when we want them they are at some outlandish place gambling; sometimes they are at St. Lazare. When the boys or girls are three or four years old, it is not so bad; we find people, perhaps as poor as ourselves, to adopt them; but when they are young, the maire and the authorities have to be asked, and there is a great deal of going to and fro." There was no need to ask who "the people as poor as themselves" were who adopted the boys or girls. They are the manufacturers of street arabs.

CHAPTER XV.

Idle days—The rag-gatherers and M. Poubelle eleven years ago—The extra-mural headquarters of the Paris rag-gatherers—The Route de la Révolte—A bit of history—To explore Paris, no disguise is necessary—Papa Alexandre—A conversation with him—An anecdote of the Cité Foucault—Papa Alexandre offers to do me a good turn—The Villa Cobain and Madame Plancard—Papa Beresina—The statement of a young rag-gatherer.

THERE are idle days and idle days. From personal experience, I should say that the idle days of the literary man, the journalist, or the musical composer are never altogether idle while they—the journalist, the composer, and author—are in fairly good health and take a pride in their profession. I have just now by me an old watch which, when wound up, goes on ticking, but the hands on the dial never move. I have spent many idle days in Paris without apparent results at the time, but the next few chapters are decidedly the outcome of them. I took scarcely a note then; but I am blessed—or cursed—with a good memory, and it is not likely to play me false on this occasion, the rather that the recollections date from less than a decade ago, when I was the Paris correspondent of a London daily. The particular phases of life with which I shall deal in these chapters have not altered materially; for though

the French capital is outwardly the most go-ahead centre, it is in reality the most conservative. I will, moreover, faithfully record the modifications I have noticed since; for though I no longer live in Paris, I am frequently there, and I have an inveterate habit of verifying my statements before I put them on paper. For instance, eleven years ago, M. Poubelle, the Prefect of the Seine, who is still in office, issued an order which, at the time, threatened to improve all the rag-gatherers off the face of Paris. The order was, and is, strictly obeyed by the inhabitants of the capital, and yet the rag-gatherer continues to flourish up to this day, like the proverbial green bay tree. I ascertained the fact not later than a few months ago, when I paid a second visit—a cursory one this time—to the extra-mural head-quarters of the unsavoury-looking, evil-smelling, but nevertheless interesting, fraternity in the Route de la Révolte, my first visit, a very long one, having taken place at the time of M. Poubelle's intended Draconian edict.

The Route de la Révolte dates from about the middle of Louis XV.'s reign (including the Regency); and although few writers, even among the French, have taken the trouble to explain its origin and its name, both are worth explaining, for the planning, as well as the naming, of that highway constitute a phase of the prologue to the Great Revolution, and what is more, a phase not very familiar to the general reader. That alone would justify my momentary digression in a book of gossip—for the present volume is nothing more.

But the phase ought to be specially interesting to England, seeing that the Route de la Révolte would probably have never been made but for a treaty forced upon France by an English statesman. I am alluding to Henry Pelham and the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, one of the secret clauses of which was the expulsion of the Young Pretender from France. The other conditions of the treaty were undoubtedly humiliating enough to France, considering that, according to the most impartial accounts, she had had the best of the English and Dutch throughout the campaigns that preceded the conclusion of that short-lived peace. In those days, however, the foreign policy of France caused little or no concern to the bourgeoisie and lower classes of Paris; but what they would not tolerate without protest was the breach of hospitality committed by Louis XV. under their very eyes, ostensibly in deference to the dictates of a foreign power, and that power England. Not once, but a score of times, have I endeavoured to draw attention to the hatred of England in France; but that hatred is no new thing, only dating from Waterloo, as some writers would make out—it is the outcome of conflicting interests of centuries. But I am not writing history, so I resume.

Indignant and disgusted, then, as were the Parisians with the avowed conditions of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, they raised a howl of invective when it became known that the Young Pretender had been hustled into a carriage one night as he was leaving the opera, and conveyed to the frontier. Even Madame de

Pompadour stigmatized the act as a cowardly one. "Sire, c'est une lâcheté," she said.

As usual, the Parisians had recourse to song to express their dissatisfaction—songs, smart and witty, like their predecessors, if not their forefathers—for the population of Paris was never recruited by procreation, but by importation—had sung before the Saint Bartholomew massacres, during the Fronde, and at the end of Louis XIV.'s reign—songs the like of which one rarely hears nowadays, perhaps because the republican tyrants are not deemed worthy of the trouble to compose them. Here is one, aimed specially at the royal guards, some of whom had helped to abduct the Young Pretender—

"Des gardes en un mot, le brave régiment
Vient, dit-on, d'arrêter le fils du Prétendant.
Il a pris un Anglais. Ah, Dieu! quelle victoire!
Muses, gravez bien vite au temple de mémoire
Ce rare événement.
Va, déesse au cent voix, va l'apprendre à la terre,
Car c'est le seul Anglais qu'il ait pris à la guerre."

Unlike Mazarin, who virtually told the Parisians that they might sing themselves hoarse, provided they paid for their singing, *i.e.* the heavy taxation imposed upon them, Louis XV., when he ceased to be the "well-beloved" of France, though he was still the "well-beloved" according to the almanacks, objected to be satirized in song, and determined to punish the Parisians by withholding his presence from them. In reality, the "well-beloved" began to be afraid of them; so, in order to avoid crossing Paris in his frequent journeys from Compiègne to Versailles, he conceived the idea of a

carriage-road that should skirt the city walls of that period. The Parisians, when they got wind of the plan, did not even give him time to christen the road; they named it for him—hence, "la Route de la Révolte." They laughed at him for his pains to punish them by his absence, just as they laughed at the National Assembly during 1871–1879 for withholding their august presence as a punishment for the Commune.

The Route de la Révolte is even more unpleasant than its name. A dead level of mud in winter, of blinding black dust in summer, with scarcely a tree to set off its hideousness, it stretches from the Rond-Point of the Porte Maillot to the canal bridge at St. Denis. Nowadays half of the road is inside, half outside Paris, owing to the extension of the city walls. It was at its starting-point that the Duc d'Orléans (the father of the late Comte de Paris) was killed in 1842 by an accident to his carriage. The monument commemorating his death has been erected on the site of the grocer's shop where the prince breathed his last.

The beginning of the road is occupied by wooden sheds and canvas tents; there is scarcely a building in the accepted sense of the word. There are low, forbidding-looking wine-shops and restaurants. At the corner of the Rue de Courcelles is "Le Café des Pieds-Humides," the very sign-board of which makes one shudder. A little farther on is the tavern of "La Femme en Culottes," and it was there that I finished my idle night in the summer of 1884.

At the outset of these pages, which are a faithful

record of my excursions to quarters altogether unfamiliar to the English reader, and persistently avoided even by the ordinary Parisian, I must warn him, the Englishman, not to expect accounts of hairbreadth escapes, cunning disguises, and the rest. Except once, when I went to the "Bal des Auvergnats," I have never adopted a disguise. On that occasion I borrowed a velveteen suit—to my great discomfort—from a coal-vendor in a street adjacent to mine, and pretended to be deaf and dumb, lest my speech should betray me; but discovery would not have been fraught with danger to life or limb; its consequence would have been simply expulsion from the entertainment. Nor have I ever carried a weapon of any kind, unless a stout stick be considered such. I have always told those among whom I went that I was a foreign journalist, and invariably found them willing to give me the information I required. I have rarely been mistaken for a *mouchard*, although I was seen once or twice in company of Monsieur Macé, the erstwhile chief of the Paris detective force, whom I still number among my very good friends. Of course, I have not always taken the statements of my informants as gospel truth, but their deviations notwithstanding, their information has been of practical value.

The tavern of "La Femme en Culottes," though it is close to the Cité Foucault—*anglicé* Foucault's Rents—which was formerly the Cité de la Femme-en-Culottes, is not the habitual resort of the rag-gatherers, except in the morning; they live in the Rents hard by, but they give the tavern a wide berth in the evening. They do

not care to be confounded with the beggars, thieves, and interlopers of every description that frequent "La Femme-en-Culottes." It is a handy house of call for the latter, for hard by is the emporium of Papa Alexandre, a notorious receiver of stolen goods, who by himself was twice as clever as the whole of the Paris detective force. Le père Alexandre was never brought to book but once in his long career, and then the authorities had to let him go for want of conclusive proof against him. I write in the past tense; for although but a few months ago the emporium seemed to be as flourishing as ever, I have no doubt that Alexandre has joined his forefathers in Abraham's bosom. He was a very old man when I saw him eleven years ago. On that occasion I bought a set of books which were displayed in his grimy window. I gave him ten francs, the price he asked, albeit that both he and I knew they were worth five times the amount. I pointed this out to him.

"I know all about it," was his answer; "but I can't go lugging them into Paris, and offer them to a second-hand bookseller, who would ask all sort of questions, for they are rare; I suppose there are not a dozen sets in the market. Nor can I afford to refuse to buy what is offered to me. I am a poor man, and must live.* I never refused a bargain but once—a live horse. What was I to do with a live horse? It would have wanted a stable, and would have eaten its head off."

* I was told a few days later by some one intimately connected with the Paris detective force that le Père Alexandre was worth a quarter of a million of francs, at the lowest computation.

"Funny that a professional horse-stealer should have come to you," I remarked, for I saw that the old man was in a talking mood, and I had been given to understand that under such circumstances he did not object to people being frank with him.

"It wasn't a professional horse-stealer," he replied. "A professional horse-stealer wouldn't have come to me. It was the lot from the Cité Foucault. A private carriage going to Neuilly mistook its way and got into the Cité. The unusual sight of a private carriage coming right into their fortress sent all the men, women, and children wild with excitement; they came trooping out, yelling and whooping like so many savages. The coachman got frightened, jumped off the box, and took to his heels. For nearly three hours after that there were excursions up and down the road, six inside the brougham, and as many outside, though how they managed to hold on to that polished roof beats me until this day. They did hold on, though; and the solitary sergent-de-ville posted here and there never as much as interfered. Then they came and offered me the carriage and horses, which I refused. I offered to buy the blue-silk cushions and the leather apron, but they wanted to sell the turn-out as it stood. When they saw that I was determined not to buy, they drove the carriage back to the Cité, and there and then began to cut steaks out of the horse's back. By the time the coachman came back, at ten o'clock at night, with a couple of policemen and an inspector, there was not ten pounds of flesh left on the bones, and if he had waited to come back till the

morning he would not have found the skeleton, for it would have been sold to the manufacturer of bone black higher up the road."

After this it will not be necessary to insist upon the general character of the majority of the dwellers on the Route de la Révolte.

I took up my books, and was about to leave, when le père Alexandre held up his finger—

"Wait a minute," he said. "I have given you one bargain," pointing to the volumes, "and you are evidently in luck's way; for though during the last week at least half a dozen of your colleagues have been looking at these books, not one inquired the price. And now I may be able to do you another turn."

"My colleagues?" I repeated, almost mechanically, for I was not a bit surprised at the old man's shrewd guess at my occupation. During our short conversation I had discovered that he was really clever and apparently far better educated than his station in life warranted.

"Yes, your colleagues. You are a journalist, I feel certain. It is not difficult to find that out. To begin with, there are not many men of decent appearance who linger longer than is absolutely necessary in this neighbourhood; secondly, there is scarcely ever more than one a day, if so many. Well, during the whole of the past week there have been at least three or four each day, and they nearly all inquired for la mère Plancard's. Putting two and two together, and knowing what we do of the new order of Monsieur Poubelle, it is easy enough to guess your errand. You are all 'hunting for copy;'

that is the correct expression, I believe," he added, with a smile. "Go and see Mother Plancard. When you have finished with her, it will be time for me to close, but I will wait for you here, and show you something which journalists rarely see, and, when they do see it, fail to understand for want of an experienced guide."

Away I went, past the Passages Touzelin, de l'École, Trébert, Saint Charles, all of them gaping, black, and forbidding-looking, narrow alleys, opening at one end on the main road, at the other in the Rue des Cailloux. Most of those alleys are inhabited by rag-gatherers; the remainder of the tenants consists of peripatetic artists (?), chair-caners, and a few Parisian workmen who have been tempted by the low rents. It would be untrue to say that what they save in that way is spent in doctor's stuff, for neither doctor nor physic is often to be met with in that neighbourhood. The shades of evening were gathering fast, and I did not look very carefully about me, hence I will not be positive, but I do not remember having noticed a chemist's or even a herbalist's. The herbalist frequently thrives in the poorer quarters, where the chemist would barely get his living, and he may exercise his calling openly, for he has to pass an examination; however, to my knowledge, there was then no establishment of that kind along that part of the Route de la Révolte—the most thickly populated one—over which I trudged. And yet typhoid and pulmonary diseases are rife there throughout the year, and defy dislodgment. I may suppose that the pestilential effluvia of the accumulation of rags would render the

physician's efforts unavailing, and so he does not even try.

With the exception of one building four storeys high, the surrounding tenements are nearly all hovels. The house in question is the headquarters of the well-to-do chiffonnier. It was then known as Madame Cobain's Villa, although Madame Cobain had gone over to the majority, only surviving her deeply regretted lord and master by about five or six years.

Cobain, I was told, was an old soldier, a fire-eater of the typical sort. He had gathered around him the remnants of the "vieille armée," who exercised in or about Paris the professions of cake-sellers and match and bootlace vendors. At night when every one was seated round the red-hot stove, one might have fancied one's self in a bivouac. But all this was changed. Madame Cobain, at the decease of her husband, made a clean sweep of the military element, with the exception of one or two lodgers who had embraced the trade of rag-gatherer. Her successor continued her traditions. It was she whom I interviewed that night.

Thanks to a letter from the Commissaire de Police, I met with a cordial reception, for, though honest and amiable enough to those who knew her well, Madame Plancard did not like strangers, and made no secret of her dislike. She was a thick-set woman of considerably over sixty, and spoke a kind of French that would probably puzzle the members of the Académie. She ruled her tenants with a rod of iron. Energetic to a degree, it was a mystery in the neighbourhood how and

when she took her rest. Within the memory of man she had never been missing from her own door—which, by-the-by, was a *porte cochère*. Seated in an armchair much the worse for wear, she watched the entrances and exits of her lodgers; and those who were behindhand with the daily instalment of their weekly rent had not a pleasant time of it. Not all the caresses to her pets, of which there was quite a collection in the kind of packing-case that did duty for a lodge, would make her abate one iota of her demands.

Still there was one exception—Daddy Beresina, as he was called, in commemoration of the ill-fated Russian expedition which he shared as a drummer-boy. Daddy Beresina was eighty if he was a day, but one would scarcely have given him sixty. He was a friend of the late proprietor, and had been an inmate of Cobain's Villa for forty years or more.

Fate befriended me at the moment of my call. Madame Plancard and Beresina were having a violent altercation on the subject of back rent. The landlady claimed her money. Beresina persisted in attempting to pay her in song, rocking himself to and fro, his woollen cap jauntily poised on one side. The old warrior took the opportunity of stepping out while Madame Plancard was busy doing the honours of her domicile. I heard him going down the alley singing the refrain of an old battle ditty, "La Victoire est à nous, zim, boum, boum."

"He does pretty well as he likes with me," sighed the old woman, shaking her head. "Of course, he pays,

but he always owes something. It is his principle. 'At any rate people will regret me when I am gone,' he says. It won't do to turn him out. Besides, he is the soul of honesty, but he spends too much in drink. I don't think that the new law will make much difference to him. He has his own customers. The concierges will keep the servants' baskets for him on condition that he takes what he wants from them before the arrival of the 'lanciers du préfet de police'"—*anglicé* the municipal street-sweepers. Beresina begins at three in the morning; at eight his basket is full. In the summer he comes back immediately, in the winter he waits at Brébant's for his soup. But that habit will soon be a thing of the past, and Brébant is almost the last to keep it up. Formerly all the restaurateurs distributed the broken pieces to the poor; nowadays they are sold to the "marchands d'Arlequin," who make a business of them, and grow fat and rich.

"How is it that Daddy Beresina took to 'la chiffe'?"

"That I cannot say, for I have only been here five-and-twenty years, but I know that when he returns in the morning with a good load, he would not change with a king. When his rags are sorted he is off to 'La Femme-en-Culottes,' which is the Exchange; for the prices of bones and paper and kitchen-stuff vary like everything else. When he knows what he has earned and pocketed his earnings, Daddy Beresina drinks until he gets speechless, comes back to throw himself on his bed, and sleeps until half-past two or quarter to three in the morning. His existence is that of a thousand

others, and among them are men who have occupied good positions, and women who were once young and pretty. They live and die like this, getting used to their filth and squalor. I heard one of them say his philosophy carried him through. I am not learned enough to know what this means. Perhaps it is another word for tord-boyau brandy. How many people have I here? Over two hundred. Very often they come from the sugar refinery close by to ask for hands. If it rains, they succeed now and then in getting half a dozen, perhaps, to go back with them to the works, but the moment there is a bit of sunshine they come out, though they do not earn half the wages in the streets. You think, perhaps, monsieur, that the young ones would prefer a different kind of life. Nothing of the kind. I have known some that came back with corporal's stripes, and took to the basket as before. They might have been sergeants, if not officers, for most of them can read and write nowadays.

"When I first came here, just over five and twenty years ago, there was a school held every evening in the shed you see in the yard. It was an old *chiffonnier*, M. Bastien, who started it. He began the lessons by a prayer in Latin, like the *curé*. In fact, I owe it to him that I can write and cipher, though I am not much of a dab at it now. Of course, we had to pay for our teaching—three sous a week for the men, two for the women. M. Bastien left the 'chiffe,' and when he died he was worth over 700 francs. Since then every one sends his little ones to school. And some of them read

quite fluently. Of course, they have so many opportunities of improving. Look at the various papers they collect. I wish they would read a little less, and drink a little less, for now, when they're half seas over, they take to discussing politics. From words it comes to blows, and then the police interfere.

"Not that they are very severe with my lodgers, for I am thankful to say that there is not a black sheep among them, and what's more the police knows it. Whatever may be said against him, 'l'enfant de la chiffe' is famed for his honesty. Take it for granted, monsieur, that those receivers of stolen goods who pretend to be rag-dealers are nothing of the kind. The commissary told me the other day, by way of compliment, that it was the rarest thing in the world to see an actor a process-server, or a rag-gatherer figure in the Assize Courts. He dare not be dishonest, the chiffonnier, for his licence is taken away on the slightest complaint against him. But I do not think he wants to be dishonest.

"I'll tell you what occurred in this very house some twenty years ago," she continued. "An old man who went about selling matches was robbed of the whole of his stock. It was the first time such a thing had happened, and he tried all he could to discover the thief. Months went by, and we thought no more about it, when, one morning, a young chiffonnier, who had left to get married, came to see me.

"'Madame Plancard,' he began, 'I cannot go on like this. I can neither sleep, eat, nor drink. It was I who

stole the matches. Here are five francs which I saved; give them to old Pierre.'

"Five francs is a great deal here, monsieur. I dared not give them to Pierre like that, especially as the young man had begged of me not to tell his name. Do you know what I did? I told the company that night that the young man had had a legacy left to him; that he had asked me to treat them, and to give Pierre three francs besides. That's how I got out of the difficulty."

The landlady told me much more. That, and the conversation with a young chiffonnier the night before, convinced me that M. Poubelle's new regulations were altogether uncalled for, and would do more harm than good, in causing a resentment against the authorities, for the chiffonnier, though the very reverse of a spy, is frequently a valuable auxiliary to the police. I give the young man's conversation verbatim, for there was nothing to correct.

"In a short time the Parisian rag-picker will have ceased to exist, if the authorities have their way; for they have declared that he is to be replaced by some mechanical contrivance in the shape of an automatic tumbril which will do his work more efficiently between sunrise and sunset than he can. A great contractor will become rich in a few years; meanwhile something like two thousand of the most harmless poor of Paris will be thrown upon the streets, without home or food. But for his well-known antecedents, one might predict with safety that the chiffonnier will go and swell the army of crime that infests Paris, for he knows no other

trade. Ten to one his parents were chiffonniers before him, and that he belongs to the 'aristocracy of the chiffe,' and has his pedigree like the proudest noble of the land."

"In some families," he went on, "la cachemire d'osier —a poetical appellation for the willow rag-basket— descends from father to son. In our own family the men carry the rifle or the crooked nail. We count seven generations of unbroken descent; not one of us has ever been in a court of justice, not one of us has ever accepted public charity; and our family is by no means an isolated one. There are four or five families living in the house where I live, by the Barrière d'Italie, of whom the same could be said. I was born there, and but for this new law I should have died here; as it is, I do not know what will happen. Work? I could not work any more than my comrades. To be shut up in a workshop the whole day! It would kill me in a month. Death for death, I prefer the gutter."

I am glad to say that the chiffonnier has not ceased to exist. All this happened eleven years ago; but his will-o'-the-wisp-like lantern still darts along the edge of the pavement, and is very frequently a welcome sight to the belated wayfarer in the more solitary quarters, where the footpad is not a thing of the past.

CHAPTER XVI.

Idle days (continued)—Papa Alexandre takes me to "La Femme-en-Culottes"—The Paris beggar—Sham cripples—Sham wounds—A too realistic painter—The swell beggar—The sham victim of political persecution—My experience of him—The Parisian's cleverness in obtaining special information.

I FOUND Papa Alexandre waiting for me on his door-step. "I am going to take you to La Femme-en-Culottes," he said, when I came up to him. "I suppose you are not afraid?" he added, taking stock of my general appearance. "No, I thought not. I fancy you are used to wandering about in all sorts of places. Besides, no harm would come to you while you were with me. 'Les amis de nos amis sont nos amis,'" he chuckled, "and it would be an evil hour for him who would dare tell those in there"—pointing to the tavern, a few yards distant—"that le Père Alexandre is not their friend. No man can be another man's friend without knowing his character and peculiarities. They are aware that I know theirs; and I fancy they know mine." With this, he turned the handle of the crazy door, and in another second we stood both inside.

A first glance at the front shop of La Femme-en-Culottes and its customers reveals nothing very

abnormal to the journalist who is in the habit of slumming in Paris. To the right a pewter counter of the regulation pattern, with the paraphernalia and fittings of the ordinary wine-shop, though perhaps not quite so bright as elsewhere; the wall behind the counter displaying rows of bottles with multicoloured labels; the bottles themselves containing liquids varying in hue from bright green to dark red. The bright green is absinthe; the dark red, "Amer Picon," or an imitation of the well-known brand. Beyond the counter, wooden tables and benches fastened to the floor and leaving a pretty wide passage to the next room, which is reserved to the *habitués*, albeit that there is nothing to prevent the casual visitor from availing himself of the privilege. The casual visitor, however, is very rare. So we may take it that the company there is more select.

Papa Alexandre, though, does not object to the vulgar crowd; so he points to a vacant table in a line with the counter, and at which we seat ourselves, facing one another. He orders a *saladier* from a brawny potman in a blue apron and with his shirt-sleeves rolled up to his armpits. A "saladier" is a bowl of claret-cup. At La Femme-en-Culottes and, for that matter, at all public resorts of the humbler classes, the bowl is simply a coarse white earthenware washhand basin, which also does duty to mix salad in. The supposed claret is *petit bleu*, ranging in price between sixty and eighty centimes the litre. The sugar, lemon, and water —there is no question of either soda or seltzer—is charged another twenty centimes. The iron ladle with

which the mixture is stirred and poured into the glasses by the customer himself, is generally fastened to the wall by a long iron chain. The precaution is necessary; for the ladle might prove a formidable weapon in a fight, and it will fetch about half a franc anywhere in that neighbourhood.

While our refreshment was being prepared, I looked around, and one glance sufficed to show me that the men and women seated around me did not belong to the distinctly criminal classes of the capital. Every now and then, in fact, I caught sight of a face that seemed familiar, although I should have had a difficulty to assign to it its right place in my memory. Noticing my vain efforts to that effect, my companion came to my aid. "Puzzled?" he said with a smile. "You think you have seen some of the present company before? So you have; but not in their present guise. They have taken off their 'make up.' If you look at that corner yonder, you will see some of it, but not all."

I followed the direction of his eyes, and noticed in the far-off angle a shapeless heap of what seemed to me an incongruous assortment of wooden things, to none of which, except a few stout cudgels, I could have given a name. But, though not exactly short-sighted, I do not very clearly distinguish at a distance, and I felt no wiser than before. Seeing which, Papa Alexandre explained: "You are in one of the haunts of the mendicant fraternity of Paris, and the corner at which you have been looking is their temporary property-room. You cannot go nearer to it without arousing

suspicion, or, to say the least, attracting attention. Besides, if you did, you would be no farther advanced; you would only see a lot of crutches, wooden legs, and so forth; and to judge of their effect you would have to see them on. That is almost impossible, unless you would care to come down here of a morning between seven and eight in summer, somewhat later in winter, when they start for their day's work. I say work, and I mean work. I am an old man and, as you may see, not very strong. The race to which I belong does not take willingly to manual labour, and, as it is, I have never done what people would call a hard day's work in my life. Well, I would sooner dig the soil or ply the pickaxe for twelve hours at a time than do what some of these do for ten or twelve hours a day all the year round.

"That fellow over there," he went on, slightly inclining his head towards the opposite side of the room, where a man of apparently forty was reading a paper, with a glass of absinthe before him—"that fellow was one of the best brass-workers you would find in Paris. I should say that, at his trade, he could earn between seven and nine francs a day. The first time he came here, about six years ago, he had just left the hospital, where he had been an in-patient for six or seven weeks, and an out-patient for several weeks afterwards. He had met with an accident to his right arm, which, though serious enough at the time, left not the slightest consequences as far as his work was concerned. His fellow-workmen, and, to a certain extent,

his employer, had kept him during that period, but he had taken a liking to an idle, vagabond life; he never went to work again. At present, he walks out every morning with his right arm tightly strapped to his body, under his clothes, and the sleeve of his coat hanging empty by his side, or, to speak by the card, from the elbow downward; for he has made himself a false stump of papier-maché and steel plates, which is absolutely a masterpiece of modelling, colouring, and mechanical skill. I doubt whether he always gets the seven or eight francs a day he could earn at his bench; but now and then he has a windfall. Just imagine the bodily discomfort of having one's arm pinned to one's side for half of one's natural life, and then tell me whether I was wrong in saying that they go to their day's work.

"And mind, the ex-brassworker's device is nothing, so far as fatigue goes, to that of those who, for a number of hours, stump away on one and sometimes on two wooden legs. And, in the majority of cases, those sham cripples are women; for of course their petticoats, such as they are, hide their frauds more successfully, although the skirts are short enough. Then there are the *faux béquillards,** who absolutely turn their feet outside in until their toes meet. Do you see that clean-shaven individual in the corner near the counter, who is playing cards with that soldier-like looking man?" asked Papa Alexandre.

I glanced in the given direction, and nodded assent.

* From *béquille*, "crutch."

The individual in question was seated "in a heap" on the wooden bench, his legs and feet turned under him, and on the floor by the table stood a small wooden platform on low wheels. "Assuredly he is not a sham cripple?" I remarked.

"I do not know; I should not like to say," was the answer. "He is certainly taken off and put on to the little carriage every night when he comes here. Nevertheless, I fancy he could walk if he liked, unless"—and here Papa Alexandre stopped a second—"unless the sham has become a reality; I mean, unless his legs and feet have become useless by this time—numbed for ever. One thing is very certain, though; fifteen years ago, when he began this thing, he could walk as well as you and I. It would not be the only instance in which the sham has become a reality. Ten or fifteen years ago, the hideous sores and festers the Paris beggars showed in order to arouse the compassion of the public were, in ninety cases out of a hundred, shams. They were painted on their legs, arms, or faces, every morning before they started. I knew the man who painted them, and right clever he was at it."

I was involuntarily reminded of Chapelier, the foundation of whose fortune had been the "faking" of the legs of poultry, but did not interrupt my companion, who went on—

"He had been a draughtsman and an illustrator of medical books, but drink and dissipation had brought him very low in the world; and then he took to this for a living. He was in reality the introducer of that

system of tattooing of which there has been so much talk lately in the fashionable papers. But amidst all his degradation he still professed to have the artistic sentiment left; he would not tattoo those that went out begging: 'firstly, because he could not do justice to his subject in that way'—I am repeating his own words; —'secondly, because he was not going to make capitalists and starve himself.' He charged two francs for every *séance*, money down on the nail; and the picture had to be touched up, if not entirely renewed, at least every three or four days, on account of its exposure to all kinds of weather, and because the pigments dried into the skin of his patients. I told you just now that he was clever; and you may judge how clever when I tell you that he prepared his surfaces of flesh as a painter prepares his canvas—by sizing them. Nevertheless the colours would dry in and the whole grow dim in a few days, and that notwithstanding the patients' careful abstinence from washing themselves, which, between you and me, was not a great sacrifice on their part, especially when the abstinence saved two francs. It was this semi-weekly tax on their pockets that made some of them revolt, and they began to apply irritating substances to their skins, and in many cases used setons, with the result that what had been a sham became a reality. I do not know what became of the painter himself. Finding his occupation gone, his visits became fewer and fewer, until one day he disappeared altogether."

Thus far the old man's information about the Paris begging fraternity, which information, I may frankly

own, was new to me. I thanked him, and, as it was getting late, rose to leave.

"Come and see me again," he said, "and I will tell you something more about the *habitués* in there," pointing to the inner room. "You have only seen some of the *tendeurs de demi-aune* and *francs-mitoux.** Next time I will show you some of *la basse pègre* (the lower category of thieves, from the Latin *piger*, "idler," "sluggard"). You must not expect to find either *la haute pègre* or *les drogueurs de la haute* (superior classes of beggars) here. The first are too clever to foregather at known places and give the police an opportunity of watching them: the second work separately, and are not given to associate with one another. Do not come again too soon, lest you should arouse suspicion; for, although they have great faith in me, it will not do to put that faith to too severe a test."

At some future opportunity I will give the result of that second visit; meanwhile, a few words about *les drogueurs de la haute*, of whom I have some personal experience. The varieties of that species are not many, and their methods, all but one, have their counterparts

* The first expression—literally, "the holder out of a half-yard"—explains itself; the etymology of the second is more difficult to trace. The compound word was known, however, in the Middle Ages, and applied to those who, by means of bandaging their heads, shammed illness. They also stopped the circulation in the arteries of the arms by very tight ligatures, with the result of inducing real fits, and arousing the pity of the passers by. I am under the impression that *mitou* is a corruption of *matois* (a cunning person, a trickster), but am by no means sure.

in every civilized country. The begging-letter writer practises as successfully in England and Germany as in France; the applicant for charity, who presents to you the card of a friend, which he has abstracted from that friend's hall table, is no novelty anywhere; but the sham victim of political persecution and political circumstances can only pursue his begging career successfully in France. In no other country would his stories, however plausible, command a moment's attention. With rare exceptions, an Englishman's political opinions are from his private life a thing apart; with equally rare exceptions, they are a Frenchman's whole existence. I need not enlarge upon that particular phase of French life, seeing that I have endeavoured to give the reader a glimpse of it in the "Story of a Political Canvass."

The sham victim of political persecution and circumstances derives a powerful aid in his false representations from the French system of distributing newspapers. I fancy there are few people in England, save those who live far away from towns, who receive their newspapers by post. I can buy a copy of a London daily or weekly in Carlisle or Plymouth for the same price I would have to give in London. To have it sent by post would entail unnecessary expense. Not so in France, where a halfpenny is added to the cost of each copy outside the Home-Counties (the Departments of the Seine and the Seine-et-Oise), not to mention the difficulties and delays in getting the paper itself. The extra outlay thus involved on each paper for a twelvemonth amounts to 18 frs. 5 centimes; the issue consisting as it does of

365 numbers, and not, as with us, of 312 or 311. The postage for a year on the heaviest French daily rarely exceeds 14 frs., and in many instances it comes to less, for there are stamps of 1, 2, 3, and 4 centimes. Few Englishmen, except those actively engaged in politics or literature, read more than one or two morning papers and one evening journal. The majority of Englishwomen are not assiduous readers of dailies; they look for their fiction and other literature elsewhere. I have known French families who subscribed to three or four different newspapers for the sake of the feuilletons and other interesting articles they contained. The feminine portion especially would not have cared to run the risk of missing an instalment of an exciting story; and this would frequently happen if they had to trust for their supply to the newsagent. Hence, they send their subscription, and the paper is delivered to them by hand or by post; in Paris frequently by the former means. There is, moreover, another reason why they should subscribe to the newspaper instead of ordering it from the newsagent. In order to mark his sympathy with the Imperialist cause, Broulard Junior began by sending a subscription to all the papers advocating that cause; and Broulard Junior is by no means an exceptional instance of throwing a pecuniary sprat to catch either a social or political herring.

To the sham victim of political persecution a new convert to any political creed except the Republican, is a kind of godsend; the Republican neophyte is of no use to him, because he is "on the make," like himself.

As a rule, the sham victim succeeds in getting timely information of the latest addition to the Imperialist or Orleanist ranks. I am unable to say with any amount of certainty how he manages it, but have an idea that he has one or more auxiliaries in every newspaper office —among those that fold, wrap, and despatch the journals. His unconscious informants in ordinary are the letter-carriers and porters who deliver the sheets, for though the sham victim is generally a man of education, good address, and creditable appearance, one may frequently see him at the wine-shop in company with those messengers. But he cannot be everywhere at once, and unless he be told at the earliest possible moment of the existence of such a new recruit as Broulard, his chances of getting a considerable donation out of him will be *nil*—nay, more, he will fail to obtain a personal interview, for even Broulard will get tired in a week or so of the constant demands on his purse.

I repeat I have an idea that the sham victim has a kind of cheap spy in most of the newspaper offices— except in those of the Republican publications. That, he knows, would be a sheer waste of money. I have seen so many wonderful devices in Paris for obtaining special information that I am no longer surprised at anything. To one of these I will refer directly I have finished with the sham victim, and his method of extracting money from the pockets of the too credulous.

The last time I settled in Paris for a lengthened period was in the beginning of 1882, and the only papers that came to me by post were *Le Gaulois*, *Le*

Soleil, and *Le Pays*. I often met M. Alfred Edwards (Jean Morin) of the *Clairon*, at present the editor of *Le Matin;* and I did some work for *Le Henri IV.*, between the editor of which—the Baron Albert de Béville, a nephew of Colonel de Béville of Coup d'État fame—and myself there sprang up a friendship, which, I am pleased to say, has lasted to this day. I was also on cordial terms with M. Paschal Grousset and Jules Vallès. Nearly all these men belonged to different camps, and, in addition to this, I was on the staff of a paper, defunct since, which was edited by the sons of M. Jules Simon. One afternoon, on coming home, my concierges—they were old dames, rather above their station—asked me to step into their room, and told me that some one had called to ask for information about me. He wanted to know to what political sect I belonged.

"What did you tell him?" I asked.

"Ma foi, monsieur, we did not tell him anything," was the answer, "because we did not know ourselves. And then he remarked upon the different papers you received, and the different persons with whom you associated."

"Well, how did you explain that?"

"That was easy enough. We told him that you are a foreign newspaper correspondent, and likely to know all sorts and conditions of people. After that he went away without leaving his name. He said he would not call again, and when he got outside we heard him say to a friend, 'Rien à faire: c'est un Anglais, un journaliste;

qui n'a probablement pas d'opinions politiques bien arrêtées.'"

The matter was simply this: one of the begging fraternity had marked me for his prey, but, puzzled by the conflicting political opinions of the journals I received, and by many equally many-sided associations, he had sent a confederate for more-minute information, and come to the conclusion that I was not worth his powder and shot. Mine was, however, an exceptional case. As a rule, he has no difficulty with the political creed of his unwilling tributaries. "Monsieur," he says to the subscriber to the *Gazette de France*, whom he cannot possibly mistake for anything but a pillar of the Legitimist cause, albeit that the fabric itself is absolutely roofless,—"Monsieur, I have been discharged by my employers on account of my well-known Royalist opinions. I am married, and the father of five young children, all of whom are totally unprovided for." The subscriber to the *Gazette de France* parts with a louis. The appeal to the "constant reader" of the Orleanist *Soleil* is couched in similar terms. "Monsieur, my father was one of the foremost in the struggle during 'les trois glorieuses' (the revolution of 1830); I never boasted of it myself, but the decree of expulsion launched against the Orleanist princes proved too much for my temper, and I told my employers that they and their political co-religionists were so much scum. As a matter of course they dismissed me. Since then I have been living on my savings, but they are practically exhausted." He comes away with ten francs. I need not describe

his tactics any farther. For the Republicans he has almost as great a contempt as the notorious pick-pocket Mimi Lepreuil, who was shadowed one morning by a detective during the latter end of Louis-Philippe's reign, when the Republicans convened meetings on the Place de la Bourse. "You need not trouble yourself," said Lepreuil; "I have tried ten pockets already, and not a blessed red cent have I got out of them: and what's more, I fancy I have left a valuable ring in the pocket of one of them. It must have slipped off my finger, unless I left it at home on my table. If you are positively bent upon doing something, you might find it for me."

I referred just now, incidentally, to the wonderful devices of the Parisians for obtaining special information, and promised to give at least one instance of their cleverness in that respect. In order to do this, I had better describe an establishment exclusively devoted to the folding, addressing, and despatch of circulars, as it came under my notice during the elections of 1885. There are about two dozen of those establishments in Paris, and they differ materially from the copying-office I have sketched, inasmuch as they rarely, if ever, undertake the transcription of long documents. Their principal *clientèle* consists of large drapers, financial agents, perfumers and proprietors of patent medicines, who at stated periods send forth enormous masses of printed matter.

In addition to those ordinary customers, there are

the extraordinary ones, such as, for instance, parliamentary candidates at a general election. During the week preceding the first ballot in October, 1885, the establishment in question despatched at least three different lists of candidates, each in a separate wrapper or envelope, to the 570,000 electors of the Department of the Seine. The reader may remember that a second ballot was necessary, and this entailed the despatch of two other lists; hence we have the respectable number of nearly three millions of papers to be folded, inserted in their envelopes, and addressed. But several candidates in the provinces applied to the same establishment at the same time, and the whole of the work had to be done in four days.

All this, however, was a mere trifle to the feat performed by a similar institution in September, 1877, when it despatched twelve millions of copies of Mac-Mahon's manifesto in the space of nine days, and would have despatched them in seven—for the addresses were written—but for the delay of the folders. I am not good at figures, so the reader must calculate for himself how many hands had to be employed in addressing the documents at the rate of two thousand per day for each hand: it being an established fact that no man can do more than two thousand in twelve hours. At the end of this time the writer, under the most favourable conditions, would have earned four francs (3*s.* 4*d.* English), that is, if entrusted with wrappers intended for large towns where the addresses had to be amplified in order to insure correct delivery. If intended for small

communes, the work is paid for at the rate of 1 fr. 25 centimes per thousand wrappers. If the profession be added to the name of the person addressed another twenty centimes are added.

It is not very wonderful that every now and then one of those white slaves should revolt against his fate, and I happen to have known such a one. He was endowed with more than ordinary intelligence. He suddenly disappeared from his accustomed seat in the office, and about a month afterwards I ran against him on the Boulevard Poissonnière. All traces of former poverty had disappeared, and he greeted me with a joyous smile of recognition.

"You will be glad to hear, monsieur, that I am doing well," he said.

"I am very glad of it," I answered; "but what are you doing?"

"If you have a few moments to spare, and will allow me to offer you some refreshment, I will tell you, monsieur; for I know you take an interest in all out-of-the-way things, and that you will keep my secret. I am doing something which, I fancy, has not been done before."

We sat down outside the Café de la Terrasse, and this is what he told me.

"I had been tired of this starvation work long before I made up my mind to have done with it, but those last elections put an end to my want of resolution. During the whole of that time I hit upon bad work, or, to be correct, the manager, who dislikes me, gave me bad

work throughout. I see that you do not understand, so I will explain. Good work is a couple of thousand wrappers for the inhabitants of the Rue Bleue, Rue Cail, Rue Auber, Rue Montmartre, etc., etc.; middling good work means addresses like Boulevard Beaumarchais, Boulevard Magenta, and so forth, for you can contract the word Boulevard.; bad work means addresses like Boulevard des Filles-du-Calvaire, Avenue de la Grande Armée, Rue de l'École de Médecine, and the like. Well, for three days I had nothing but the latter kind of work: and on the fourth, when there was still some of the Paris business to finish and the departmental jobs came in, the brute gave me all the envelopes for the Rue Sainte-Croix de la Bretonnerie, and the greater part of the wrappers for the Département des Pyrénées-Orientales.

"I did not say a word, and worked for thirty-two hours with one hour's sleep between. I had saved a few francs, and with what was paid to me, I had thirty francs in hand. That was on the 4th of October, and the month's rent for my room, twelve francs, was not due until the 1st of November. I divided my money into twenty parts, and for a fortnight perambulated the streets of Paris, looking out for lame people. In some instances I went up to them and asked them their names and addresses, telling them the truth, *i.e.* that I knew of a bootmaker who had invented a wonderful appliance, calculated to give them great relief, and that with their permission I would send them particulars of the thing. In fifteen days I collected something

like a thousand names, for I walked the streets from morn till night.

"Then I went to the individual whom I had in my mind's eye when I started my experiment. He is a clever and sensible man, earning a decent living, but, like a great many of his kind, afraid to venture the little he has saved in advertisements on a large scale. He has registered his invention, which, as you know, is a different thing from patenting it. I told him what I had done.

"'I have a list of a thousand people, all more or less well-to-do, who might benefit by your invention if it were brought under their notice,' I said. 'I am not going to show you the list, for I want you to trust me to a certain extent, in return for which trust I will trust you. Get five thousand circulars printed, which will cost you about twenty francs; give me one thousand and keep the rest. Give me one thousand envelopes and one thousand stamps of two centimes. I will address and despatch them for fifteen francs, and you shall give me 10 per cent. on any orders you may get through them. That's where my faith in you comes in. The speculation will cost you about fifty francs. Under ordinary circumstances, if you wished to advertise in that way, you would have fifty thousand circulars printed, the agency to which you entrusted them would charge you a hundred francs for addressing and despatching them, besides the stamps and envelopes. The agency would take a Bottin (*i.e.* directory) and copy the names, and the chances would be that not

one hundred of your notices would reach the right people.'

"He acted upon my suggestion. Instead of perambulating the streets of Paris until a late hour, I went home at six and spent two nights in addressing the circulars. That was about a fortnight ago, and I have had sixty francs commission since. But my list will do for other people. I have used it for a maker of elastic stockings, and I am constantly adding to it, besides preparing one for the vendors of nostrums for preventing baldness. This is only the beginning. I shall compile lists of stammerers, of deaf people, of short-sighted people, etc."

I think I was justified in crediting the Parisians with a good deal of cleverness in obtaining special information.

THE END.

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